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THE MAN WHO WAS GUILTY. A Novel.

THE ABANDONED CLAIM. A California Story.

THE BLACK CURTAIN. A Novel.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE MAN WHO WAS GUILTY

BY

FLORA HAINES LOUGHEAD

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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Dedicated

TO

MY LITTLE NELLO,

IN THE HOPE THAT HIS PURE EYES, FROM ANOTHER WORLD,

MAY LOOK WITH APPROVAL UPON

HIS MOTHER'S WORK.

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THE MAN WHO WAS GUILTY.

CHAPTER I.

A JOURNALISTIC ENTERPRISE.

He did not look like a criminal. There were fine lines in his face, his forehead was intellectual, and his eyes had a studious, reflective habit. An unprejudiced observer, meeting him anywhere else, would have pronounced him a gentleman by instinct and breeding, and withal a man of refined pursuits. His coat, a garment of some non-committal gray stuff, helped to perfect the illusion, and only his striped pantaloons proclaimed a ward of the State.

Business is business, and the young man who was stupidly staring at him could ill afford to waste time analyzing his own impressions.

"May I ask what is the charge against you?" he said, delicately, to open conversation with the fellow.

The convict looked his questioner square in the eye for a moment, as if to fathom the motive which had prompted the inquiry.

"I stole ten thousand dollars from the bank of

Yerba Buena," he said, bluntly. "I believe they called it embezzlement."

The man who had asked the question was abashed. A young college graduate and newly fledged reporter on the staff of the "San Francisco Hornet," he was still in that verdant stage of experience when journalism appears to be a lofty calling, conducted for the amelioration of the race rather than for personal profit, and various philosophical questions were revolving in his brain, to be dished up for the benefit of the public. He had already precipitated upon the community a hot and animated discussion of the causes governing the origin and growth of the hoodlum population. Clergymen considered it in their pulpits, orators debated it upon the rostrum. It was made the subject of leading editorials, and he had fanned the popular flame by publishing a series of opinions on the subject, gleaned from interviews with the prominent men of the Coast. Following this, it occurred to him that it would be unique as well as interesting to interview some representative members of the criminal class itself, regarding the influences which had operated to bring them to grief.

"I don't think, my boy," said the friendly warden, as the great iron gates of San Quentin creaked dismally to admit the visitor; "I don't think, my boy, that a word of caution will be amiss. You say this is your first visit to a state prison. Remember that you are among a cunning lot of men, with whom deception and falsehood are habitual. You 'll find, when you come to question

them, that there is n't a guilty man among them. Don't be hoodwinked."

If the reporter colored a little under this well-meant admonition, he resolved none the less to behave like an experienced man of the world. Subsequent events justified the warden's prediction. A singular and almost universal innocence appeared to prevail among the permanent residents of San Quentin, and the stories to which he listened would have wrung the heart of a credulous humanitarian. The population seemed to be exclusively composed of victims of conspiracy and prejudice; highwaymen who had stopped stages when out on a lark, and forced express messengers to disgorge their treasures at the muzzles of empty rifles; men who roused from a prolonged debauch to find themselves under arrest for murder; practical jokers who had borrowed strange steeds, designing to return them before their absence was discovered; forgers who had playfully put familiar signatures at the bottoms of checks, and then filled them out and cashed them in moments of forgetfulness; and every man among them was on the alert to make proselytes to faith in his innocence, in the furtherance of certain deep-laid plans by which he expected to achieve his deliverance from the vile durance in which he was held.

The visitor looked, therefore, with not a little curiosity and surprise at this fellow, who stood up so boldly as his own accuser.

"And your name?" he said, briefly.

"Philip King."

A train of recollections awakened at his reply.

Five years before, while the reporter was in the junior class at the University of California, San Francisco society had been stirred by an event which struck to its very core, when young Philip King, a trusted employé of one of the soundest commercial institutions in the State, had been found guilty of appropriating the funds of the bank, and was sentenced to San Quentin for an unconscionable term of years. The fellow had acted like a lunatic in the outset, for when he had got safely off to a country where no extradition law could touch him, he had voluntarily given himself up to a crazy detective who had followed him on a wild-goose chase, and returned like a lamb to the slaughter.

Egad, how the fellow must have suffered! He was little more than twenty at the time — a mere boy — and ranked a veritable Adonis in society; and here he was, five years later, looking like a man of forty, with the hard, tense lines about his face which are the unmistakable record of severe mental torture. But he was a handsome man still — the handsomest he ever saw, the visitor reflected, staring at him with a boy's undisguised sympathy.

He weakened under the look. His lips set in a straight, grim line, and a quiver shot over his face, as if for a moment the rigid guard he had set upon himself was in danger of giving way. In an instant, however, the expression of calm endurance had returned, and he lifted his eyes in cool interrogation.

To bridge the embarrassment of the moment, the reporter rattled off to him, in what must have

seemed a very ingenuous way, the motives which had prompted his visit to the penal institution, winding up with a lame apology.

"And if you would be so kind as to help me out a little from your own experience, Mr. King — don't think I confound you with the rest" —

The convict cut him short with another of those penetrating glances, that somehow reminded the visitor of a blow straight from the shoulder.

"There is no reason for making any distinction. I am here on precisely the same level as my fellow-prisoners." He squared his shoulders resolutely, as if to meet and sustain the full burden of his crime. "If there is any difference in our early training, so much the less excusable the taint I have incurred. If I hold myself free from further contamination in the midst of these surroundings," — with a slight wave of his hand, indicating the forbidding quadrangle with its moving population of low-browed ruffians, and the murky air reeking with foul and unclean language, — "that is my own affair, and a matter of future demonstration." The concluding words had a despondent ring, and his head bent forward, while his eyes sought the damp pavement.

He was the first to break the silence which ensued.

"You wish me to recapitulate the causes which have made me what I am. I might answer, briefly, 'Speculation in stocks;' but there must be some downfall in a man's moral nature before he can risk, for his own selfish gain, funds which are in-

trusted to his honor. You will excuse me now, sir. I have some finishing touches to give a lot of furniture that is to be shipped to the city to-morrow. If I have made a failure of life in other ways, I am making a small success as a cabinet-maker." A faint glimmer of a smile played about his lips as he bowed himself away.

CHAPTER II.

THE CRIME OF PHILIP KING.

PHILIP KING'S flight to China, on the eve of the discovery of his defalcation, was his one cowardly act. Before the Gaelic was out of sight of land he would gladly have recalled the step. He asked himself what consolation or relief he could expect in a foreign land, with the dark shadow of an unatoned crime forever following him. With the secret consciousness of guilt in his heart, could he ever look a fellow-man in the eye without a miserable sense of hypocrisy, and the conviction that if the truth were known he would be spurned by every honest man? A thousand times better to return and bravely face the penalty of his crime. When the Oceanic reached Hongkong, a week after his arrival, and a keen-faced little man with ferret-like eyes sprang on shore, the first person he perceived was Philip King, haggard and hollow-eyed, pacing up and down the wharf. The detective decided at once upon the tactics to which he would resort in bagging his prey. Clapping him upon the shoulder in a genial way, he cried,—

"A fine day, King! And so I shall have the pleasure of your company on the steamer Saturday."

King shook off his touch and quietly faced him.

"No extradition can reach me here, old fellow. But you will have my company all the same, and you can get out your papers when we run into San Francisco."

The detective viewed him with a curiosity not unmixed with suspicion. The calling he pursued was one calculated to inspire anything but an optimistic view of human nature. A man whose moral constitution was so lax as to enable him to plunder his fellow-citizens of thousands of dollars without a qualm, and who was yet burdened with conscientious scruples that debarred him from making the most of his liberty when he had escaped beyond the pale of legal jurisdiction, was a moral anomaly, partaking of the nature of both hypocrite and knave. He would bear watching.

During the days that followed, King noted with quiet amusement that wherever he went through the narrow streets of the ill-smelling foreign city his steps were persistently dogged. On several occasions he turned and encountered Fleece face to face, and that worthy greeted him with an assumption of indifference that ill sufficed to cover his secret anxiety lest the game he had come so far to capture should yet succeed in eluding him. As King boarded the steamer a week later, he noted with some compassion that the rubicund little man who followed at his heels had lost color and flesh in the prosecution of his self-appointed vigils. Once relieved from his apprehensions, the detective, barring a grim undertone of authority, became a pleas-

ant and genial companion, and would have treated the voyage as a jolly episode of travel had not King's graver mood precluded such a possibility.

It was nearly dusk on a summer night when the huge ocean steamer drew up to the wharf in the southern portion of San Francisco. The half menacing, half protective air Fleece had assumed toward King on the high seas, was exchanged for an air of arrogant authority as he beheld his prey safe within the jurisdiction of the port. As the boat's side groaned against the timbers of the dock he produced a pair of steel hand-cuffs and clapped them upon his prisoner, who submitted to the indignity without a word of protest or appeal.

Even in the dim light it was apparent that an unusually large number of people were gathered at the landing to welcome the great ship's human cargo. Fleece observed the circumstance with undisguised gratification, and pressed his way to the front, blandly receiving the enthusiastic cheers accorded to him and his charge. As he stepped along the gangway he made an adroit turn to one side to avoid the crowd, and roughly assisted King into a cab, summoning a blue-coated officer to a seat on the driver's box, in ostentatious precaution.

As the vehicle sped along Second Street the prisoner leaned forward and looked through the open window, absorbing in deep-drawn breaths the fresh vigor of the ocean breeze, already waving its phantom banners of mist over the western hills. Returning to his country after a secret and shameful flight, with the prospect before him of serving out

a felon's sentence, the young fellow was suddenly moved by some deep latent sentiment of patriotism, and he thanked God that he was born in a land where justice was dealt out with an impartial hand, and the same principle of society which demanded retribution for a crime committed, held out a promise of redemption to the man who honestly repented of his error, and made earnest effort at reparation.

The ground on either side of the roadway climbed higher and higher, until the lights from the houses on each side twinkled like stars along the verge of a rocky chasm. As the street emerged from the shadows the prisoner looked back, straining his eyes to discern the outlines of a quaint Gothic cottage, perched like an eyrie on the highest point of Rincon Hill. At that instant a light gleamed through the window of an upper room, piercing the darkness — a symbol and a promise. Something very like a sob burst from the young man's lips at the sight.

"Oh, come now, brace up! Don't be trying to get a sight of home, or worry over what the folks are thinking. Keep a stiff upper lip for the boys. Those newspaper chaps will be round you, thick as bees, in five minutes more, ready to gauge every breath you draw and tally down every beat of your pulse," admonished Fleece, not unkindly. "Hear about Halford, of the daily 'Commercial,' at O'Kane's execution, last month? Begged leave to go on the scaffold just as they were pulling the black cap over the villain's head; stalked up to

O'Kane, note-book in hand, and asked the rascal if he 'd be kind enough to wriggle his toes as long as he was conscious. I 'm blest if newspaper enterprise don't mean something nowadays."

Having indulged in this enlivening bit of reminiscence, Fleece leaned back in his seat, flattering himself that he was treating his ward like a gentleman.

He really had reason to feel very kindly toward King. The young fellow's defalcation had occurred at a most opportune moment, when the city was becoming insupportable with its monotonous virtue, and work in his line had almost wholly ceased. He had started across the ocean in pursuit of the culprit, mocked by his associates, discouraged by his friends, and a prey to secret misgivings of his own, trusting only to the luck that had never deserted him, and a swift apprehension and stern intimidation of the fugitive, abetted by the latter's probable ignorance of international law; and behold! he had found his worst forebodings verified, and the criminal fully aware of the advantages of his position. Yet King had yielded himself up without demur, and the officer was returning in triumph, when he might well have served as a butt for public ridicule.

They passed along Montgomery Street, lined with tall buildings, whose dark fronts and deserted pavements bespoke the cessation of the day's busy labor, pausing once where the street was blocked by an excited throng who crowded about a newspaper bulletin-board. The detective took advan-

tage of the momentary halt to thrust his head out of the window, and a broad smile of satisfaction crossed his face as he read the announcement: —

BAGGED IN HONGKONG.

DARING AND BRILLIANT CAPTURE.

The Embezzler King Arrested in a Foreign Port, by the Able Detective S. B. Fleece.

Full Particulars, etc., etc.

The crowd parted, and the cab rattled noisily over the pavement, making a swift turn into a narrow lane lined with dingy buildings. A sudden halt told that their journey's end had been attained. The prisoner was so absorbed in thought that he did not observe the rough crowd who had gathered about the entrance to the prison to do honor to the arrival of a distinguished guest. As he stepped from the cab he stumbled, and, throwing up his manacled hands in an ineffectual effort to save himself, would have fallen to the ground had not Fleece seen his plight and sprung to his relief. A jeer arose from the coarse observers, caught up and repeated by dark forms in the rear, until the mocking cry changed to a fiendish shout of exultation — the demoniacal rejoicing of a multitude of human beings over the downfall of a fellow-creature. If the prisoner recognized its import he gave no sign, but moved with firm and measured step into a large bare room containing a number of lounging policemen. A massive iron door opened and closed be-

hind him ; he was conducted along a dark passage-way, through a barred gate, into a brightly lighted office, and stood in the presence of the captain of the prison.

In the world without King had been a person of some consequence, — a gay young society fellow whose career had been nipped short by one false step ; a daring villain who had spirited away the funds of his employers. Here his identity was lost, his individuality obliterated. He was simply one of many thousand other criminals who annually came and went, who must be fed and housed and cursed into submission to the rules, or, if need be, locked in a dark cell and starved into compliance. An animated and prolonged discussion arose regarding the quarters to which the newcomer should be assigned.

In their consideration of the weighty question of the disposition of his physical frame the prison officials paid no regard to the movements of the prisoner, who sank down upon a wooden chair and surveyed the scene before him with unconcealed loathing and disgust. The air reeked with vile odors and foul gases, and the lights burned with a dim and sickly glare. The uneven stone floor was coated with slime and mottled with patches of filth. One side of the long open passage into which he had been ushered was lined with a succession of great cages with barred fronts, and through the gratings the haggard faces of men and women, like caged wild beasts, looked out upon him. Every type and phase of vice were there, from the low-

browed, brutal faces of abandoned ruffians, to the weak features, with their lines of indecision, which characterize the novice in crime; while in the dim shadows, standing or sitting apart from their fellows, he noted the melancholy visages of men whom fatality, or want, or a moment's wild indulgence of passion, had plunged into the devouring maelstrom of sin.

During his listless observation he marked one singular fact which after experience confirmed. Whereas among the men varying grades of guilt and degradation were discernible, and the humbled and remorseful faces of a few held out a faint promise of regeneration, the women appeared to have sunk to one common level of depravity. Whether because from the shining heights of pure and sinless womanhood the impetus of the unhappy creatures' fall had served to carry them to a greater depth of iniquity, or because of the intricate manner in which all feminine virtues are interwoven and made dependent the one upon the other, so that the breaking of a single fibre leads to the destruction of the whole fabric, certain it is that upon every woman's face was written the language of hopeless moral pollution. Crazed by liquor, inflamed by base passions, enraged by confinement, the abandoned creatures beat against their bars, joining in a foul chorus of obscenity and profanity and coarse abuse of their captors, at which the most accomplished of their masculine competitors became abashed, conceding the defeat of their own ineffectual efforts at rivalry.

Gazing appalled upon this scene of horrible revelry, Philip King became aware of a movement at his side, and looking in the direction from whence he had entered, saw a long bench upon which were ranged half a dozen children of tender years, gazing upon the repulsive sight with varying emotions of curiosity, amazement, and fear. Among them was one little girl some four years old, attired in dainty garments, soiled by contact with the mire of the street — a mother's darling, in search of whom anxious hearts were even then scouring the city, and whose innocent eyes opened wide with piteous horror at the fearful spectacle before her. As the child encountered King's sympathetic gaze she sprang from her hard seat, and running to the prisoner's side, hid her face upon his knee and sobbed out her grief and terror. Her new-found friend sheltered the silken head with a caressing movement of his manacled arms.

"In the Lord's name, what does this mean?" demanded King of the turnkey, who presented himself, keys in hand, ready to show the prisoner to his quarters.

"You 're to come to No. 1, and don't be all night about it, neither."

"What are these children doing here?" King's voice was stern, but the child who clung to him smiled up into his face with loving confidence.

"That 's right! Go prying into affairs that are none of your concern, will you? That 's the way with you high-toned thieves. 'T ain't enough that you should make a big haul and get a nice place to

yourself, instead of being stowed away with the poor devils over there" — pointing to the cages occupied by the common drunks, misdemeanors, and petty larcenists.

"The little beggars were picked up on the streets since one o'clock," vouchsafed the captain, anxious to conclude the interview and rid himself of a troublesome customer.

"And you put them here!"

One would have thought, to see the prisoner, that their relations were reversed, and the criminal had become the accuser, the officer one who had sinned against the law.

"Certainly. It 's a mere temporary arrangement. Perhaps you have more sumptuous quarters to offer, Mr. King?"

A loud chorus of laughter greeted this brilliant sally on the part of the captain. The prisoner bit his lip and was silent for a moment. Then he spoke more gently.

"Will you allow this little girl to share my quarters until she is called for? Her parents will not be long in coming. Or perhaps you will be kind enough to send to their address? I will give you the number."

"Stuff! Of all the preposterous demands!"

The captain gently loosened the little hands that clung to their protector, and as King was urged away he was followed by an imploring childish cry and the wistful prayer of a pair of tearful eyes.

For the first time his sin came home to him in its full force and significance. In his mad stupid-

ity, his rash folly, his insensate greed for wealth and position, he had not alone abdicated all claim to the trust and esteem of his fellow-men, and incurred the heavy penalty of the law. He had forfeited the right to shield a little child from harm.

He dropped upon the low pallet in the cell to which the turnkey had conducted him, taking no inventory of its dreary interior: the thinly whitewashed walls, the single stool, the narrow aperture high in the door, through which faint rays of light struggled in from the dim passage-way outside. Burying his face in his hands, he reviewed the circumstances of his crime. He had been permitted to read the San Francisco papers as the vessel ploughed her way homeward over the calm waters of the Pacific, and his heart smote him as he recalled the staunch defense his friends had made, their unfaltering advocacy of his innocence, in the face of his suspicious disappearance. He had pictured them gathering about him on his return, and shrank with keenest pain from the confession he must make, the lie he must give their confidence and trust. But now, as in the solitude of his cell he awaited their coming, he thought that it would be sweet to clasp a friendly hand and meet a pitying eye, even though their regard was altered into the compassion honest men exhibit toward one who has been false to his standard.

As time wore on and no one came save occasional journalists, who fulfilled the predictions of the detective, and punctually presented themselves to gain all possible information, the prisoner arrived

at a dim realization of the truth, that with the first conviction of his guilt his friends had fallen away. He had fancied, too, that she might come, the blue-eyed, winsome girl, who had lured him into temptation with her careless words. In imagination he saw her again, and caught the flash of her eyes as she uttered the words that had proved his doom. They had been discussing the wealth of certain local magnates, and the uncertain moral foundations upon which their hoards of gold had been accumulated.

"But they are rich," she had said, "and riches are more substantial than principles. The only sin in stealing is in being found out."

Ay; he had committed the unpardonable sin. Not in making too free with his neighbor's money. She recognized no crime in such a deed. But he had been found out. The money he had taken with a wild hope that by brilliant speculation he could achieve a fortune that would enable him to offer her his hand and the heart that was already in her keeping, had proved his ruin. The bottom had dropped out of the market. That was all. The situation had not even the redeeming grace of novelty, for the bottom was forever dropping out of the stock market, and plunging a flock of over-confident speculators into a pit of irretrievable disgrace.

Hour after hour passed by, and his solitude remained undisturbed. His faith in human friendship waned, but he looked forward with ever increasing confidence to the coming of one upon whose constancy he knew he could rely, though all

the world beside proved false. As the clock in the tower of St. Mary's Cathedral chimed the hour of midnight, he heard the rustle of a woman's garments in the dark passage-way, and the sound of a quavering voice addressing the turnkey, and he knew that she had come. Lifting his eyes to the narrow grating, he saw, framed in masses of soft hair that had become thickly threaded with silver during the past six weeks, divine love and compassion and forgiveness in her eyes, his mother's face. Another moment and the key grated in the lock, and the door was thrown open.

"Mother!"

She put her arms about him, and gently drew his head down to her bosom, stroking his hair with trembling hands, her tears raining upon his head, calling him her poor, dear, unhappy boy, while he confessed his penitence and remorse upon the breast that had cradled him in infancy.

He passed a miserable and restless night, tossing upon his hard bunk, beneath vermin-infested blankets, at times sinking into a state of semi-consciousness that was more lethargy than slumber, only to be aroused by blood-curdling yells from remote portions of the building, mingled with the curses of officers, who endeavored to stem with a counter-current of profanity the mad flights of brains diseased by alcohol or vice. The groans of a wounded patient in the Receiving Hospital echoed like a dull refrain of misery throughout the night. In the underground dungeon of which his cell formed a

constituent part, no straggling ray of sunlight was ever admitted to betray the line of demarkation between day and night; and it was only by the renewal of the rumble on the streets above that he knew when morning approached, and the commencement of the day's traffic was at hand.

As he lay stretched upon his bunk, trying to reconcile himself to his unaccustomed surroundings, the door opened, and a man appeared, bearing a tin dish filled with an unsavory compound of meat and potatoes, flanked by a chunk of coarse bread and a tin cup of muddy-looking coffee.

When the fellow closed the door behind him, King sat up and viewed the food with undisguised loathing. He said to himself that if his life depended upon it, he could never bring himself to taste the stuff.

The next minute he took himself to task for his squeamishness. Thousands of honest, hard-working men in San Francisco, and all over the world as well, — mechanics at the bench, farmers behind the plough, gallant soldiers in the field of duty, — would consider themselves blest if they were provided with fare half as wholesome and substantial. And who was he, that his epicurean tastes should revolt against such frugal fare? No industrious laborer, putting to noble use the strength and muscle with which the Creator had endowed him; no soldier, risking his life in his country's cause. A common thief, forsooth; a felon awaiting sentence; a man who had laid hands upon property not his own, and was suffering the logical consequences of a guilty

deed. A month later would in all probability see him an inmate of San Quentin, condemned to years of penal servitude, a conscious, living machine, his individuality forgotten, doing the bidding of a harsh master. It would be prudent to overcome in the outset any delicacy regarding the manner and service of the food necessary for his daily sustenance, and he addressed himself resolutely to the task.

His repugnance refused to be conquered. With the basin on his knees, he was patiently endeavoring to consume his rations, when an early visitor was admitted, and King suspended his meal to give vent to an ejaculation of surprise.

The newcomer was a man about thirty years of age, tall and jaunty, attired in the most exquisite taste, with a face whose prototype is daily encountered in any club-room where young society men congregate. Intelligent, courteous, dignified, his prevailing air of well-bred indifference was for the moment disturbed as he beheld the sorry plight of his friend.

"What! Dartmoor?"

"Yes, King."

Nothing could have presented more forcibly to King the contrast between the life he had led and the new era upon which he had entered, than the advent of this punctilious man of the world. The two had sustained a friendly intimacy for years, and the younger man had enjoyed the freedom of the elder's luxurious bachelor apartments, while extending to him in turn the hospitality of his own

home. Together they had built many a stately castle in Spain, and watched the airy edifices topple over into space, moved only by a secret determination to some day build them upon sure foundations. And yet this intimacy had been a superficial, casual tie, based only upon a whimsical preference for each other's society, and never ennobled by any congenial interest or unselfish regard that would cause either to turn instinctively to the other in time of need. Indeed, King reflected in quick self-reproach that Dartmoor was one of the last men he should have called upon for help or sympathy. Yet he had presented himself unbidden in that noisome spot, and was regarding the prisoner with pitiful eyes that took in every detail of his miserable surroundings, leaning up against the wall as if faint and sickened at the revelation, grasping the prisoner's hands with the involuntary gesture of one who would fain lift his friend from the slough of wretchedness into which his feet had strayed.

Dartmoor's agitation was so frank and unaffected that King was deeply moved, and he was not surprised when, instead of the usual formula of condolence or stiff-necked reproof tendered by friends on such occasions, there came instead a sorrowful exclamation, —

"Oh, King! The pity of it!"

The guilty man had no response ready. His mind roved back to the day when he first took his position in the bank, jubilant in the assurance of a handsome salary, and looking forward to a prosperous and upright career. How bright the world

had seemed then, and how easy he had thought it would be to win advancement through industrious application and faithful adherence to the old-fashioned principles of truth and honor. Hope, ambition, happiness, all sacrificed by one false step.

"I don't know what made me, Dartmoor," he replied, shakily. "A year ago I 'd have sworn I would cut my throat first, but the devil himself got hold of me. I let go of honor, principle, reason, all at once. When I realized it, it was too late."

Dartmoor answered this confession with a sympathetic pressure of the hand.

"What did you do with the money, King?" he asked, after a short pause.

"Stocks."

"Do you suppose it can be traced? Who was your broker? Were the transactions confidential?"

"Confidential as such things usually are," replied the prisoner, responding first to his friend's last query. "Raymond Brothers were the firm. I don't suppose they would volunteer any information."

"Then it will be easy enough to cover up the thing," said Dartmoor, confidently. "What counsel have you engaged?"

"I have no use for counsel. I shall offer no defense."

"No defense!" Dartmoor stared as if he thought the young man had gone mad. "No defense! What are you thinking of, King? How do you expect to get off?"

"I don't expect to get off. I stole the money, and I mean to face the music. I have n't the slightest ambition in the world to ape Floyd or Riley, or the rest of those fellows, — employing a set of sharp attorneys and hired witnesses; escaping justice by taking a shrewd advantage of crotchets of the law. Besides, Dartmoor, what is to be gained?"

"What is to be gained?" echoed the other, in open amazement. "Liberty, happiness, a spotless name, — everything worth having. As I understand it, you have n't said a word yet that really criminates you. There is n't an atom of proof against you that could n't be overturned. There are a dozen ways in which the money might have been abstracted without involving anybody in the bank's employ. Say you found out the deficiency and feared it might be charged upon you, so made off, eh? Think it over, King. Don't be hasty."

"Think it over," returned the prisoner, slowly. "I have been thinking it over for the last six weeks; and I tell you I had a thousand times rather be working out the honest penalty of my crime, branded as a thief for all the rest of my days, than to tread the streets of San Francisco a free man, borne down with a secret burden of perjury and sin, knowing myself to be a fraud upon the community, offering an insult to my fellows every time I touch the hand of an honest man, conscious that I am lower and viler than the meanest vagabond in the crowd! I appreciate your kindly motives, Dartmoor, but I don't think I was ever cut out for a hypocrite. I could n't do the whited sepulchre business."

Glancing up at his visitor as he concluded, the criminal wondered what had come over Dartmoor. The latter stood silent and motionless, his features working under the influence of some strong emotion, but his eyes glowing with a look of high resolve so foreign to his accustomed expression that King marveled and was dumb, awaiting in breathless expectation the moment when his agitation should be translated into words.

That moment never came. With a sudden impatient gesture Dartmoor seemed to rid himself of an unwelcome thought, and he was the man of the world again, shrewd, keen-eyed, practical, respecting conventionalities, disdainful of false sentiment.

"King, you are doing yourself an injustice. It 's plain to me you never meant to steal the money. Granted that you committed an error; circumstances made you a thief."

He drew out his watch, a handsome gold timepiece, and consulted it carelessly, then frankly extended his hand.

"It is evident, old fellow, that you want to make a martyr of yourself, and I for one shall do my best to prevent it. You 'll be brought up to plead in the police court to-day at ten o'clock; consider well what you say. I 'll bring Shaver, the attorney, round with me, — a man sharp as a steel trap; the very one to get you out of this scrape."

King listened to his friend's sophistry with grave attention, but as they parted he met Dartmoor's searching glance with a look of inflexible resolution.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN IN THE CASE.

After a few hours the door of King's cell was flung open, and he was marshaled along the central passage of the prison, to where a group of fellow-prisoners stood on the damp stones of the pavement, and answered to their names as they were called off the great register. Like a flock of sheep they followed the bailiff up a steep, narrow flight of steps, some bearing themselves with an air of reckless bravado, others with subdued hilarity, while now and then one seemed wrapped in sad introspection, and shrank from the curious glances of spectators, apparently not so far lost to the better sentiments of his manhood as to have altogether forfeited his sense of guilt and shame. Passing through the doorway at the head of the steps, they entered a small pen partitioned off from the main floor of the court-room by a wooden railing, and furnished with long benches. On an elevated platform at the left, upon a high seat upholstered with crimson damask, and overhung with a dingy canopy of the same material, a small, gray-haired man, clad in a dark suit of citizen's clothes, was seated. His forehead was full and prominent, and the skeptical expression that rested on his face

was tempered by the glance of his mild blue eye, unimpeachable witness of a kindly nature. Ranged at desks about and below him sat the minor officials of the court. The room was crowded with people, who had gathered to enjoy the sight of a criminal a little above the ordinary run of the malefactors who daily made their appearance in the police court.

At a nod from the judge, the clerk of the court called off the cases on the morning's docket, reading them in a monotonous voice, only intelligible to the trained ears of the officers of the court. Man after man stood up in the dock at the bailiff's bidding, not comprehending the source of the order, and sentences were passed upon luckless wights who failed to distinguish a word that passed the lips of clerk or judge.

Crowded upon one of the hard seats, with a boozy inebriate on his right and a flashy hoodlum on his left, King's gaze wandered mechanically over the room, perceiving many familiar but no friendly faces. When his own turn came the summons fell unheeded on his ears, and it was not until the bailiff, leaning over from the open space before the rail, rapped him sharply upon the shoulder with a stout cane, that he started to his feet. As he rose he observed Dartmoor standing among a group of indifferent spectators on the opposite side of the court-room.

"Philip King — Embezzlement of funds from the Bank of Yerba Buena."

The prisoner remained quietly standing, and the

indictment was repeated more distinctly. It was the first time he had ever entered a court-room, and he was ignorant of the accustomed rules of procedure, while dimly conscious that something was expected of him, the precise nature of which he did not know. The bailiff awakened him to a sense of his remissness by a sharp tap of his cane.

"Well, what 're you keeping the court waiting for? What 's your plea?"

King knew that the critical moment of his life was upon him; that if he should maintain his innocence he might be acquitted for lack of evidence, and even in the event of his conviction there would always be many who would believe that he had been guiltless. He saw Dartmoor lay his hand on the shoulder of a lawyer who stood by his side, accompanying the act with an interrogating look, and he answered with one of silent negation. He turned and faced the court, and replied to the charge, in a voice in which there was no hint of indecision, —

"Guilty."

The brief silence that followed was succeeded by an unintelligible utterance from the judge, and another name was called by the bailiff, when the court was scandalized by an unprecedented proceeding.

"If it please the court!"

The prisoner, who, after his plea of guilty, had been remanded to his quarters in the tanks beneath, instead of obeying the order, remained standing somewhat unsteadily upon his feet, lean-

ing heavily upon the dingy wooden railing that separated the prisoners' pen from the open court, and which he had grasped with both hands. The bailiff indignantly repeated the order, pointing imperiously to the open door leading to the hell of sin and shame and foul air below. The judge, persuaded that the prisoner had failed to comprehend his decree, repeated it in more decisive tones.

"If it please the court!"

Obviously the criminal at the bar had something to say, and was determined to be heard. The judge frowned down upon him from the elevated seat, whose massive carvings and wine-colored canopy invested his small figure with a subtle air of sanctity calculated to awe the average spectator. The bailiff, aghast at the audacity of the prisoner, discharged a volley of energetic demands for silence in the court, with the result of hushing the rowdy element in the rear and drawing the attention of every one present to the spot, but failed to repress the criminal, who stood in the dock, borne down with a singular physical weakness, but stout of spirit and determined to be heard. From distant recesses of the court-room several faces peered forward in anxious expectancy, assured that the moment had at last arrived when King was about to make a statement that would vindicate his honor and carry conviction of his innocence to the minds of all who listened. Dartmoor, who leaned idly against the jamb of the outer doorway, eyed the prisoner intently, his demeanor expressive of calm unconcern the while.

"If it please the court, I have a protest to make. I protest against innocent children being thrust into that hot-bed of crime below. I protest against their sensitive lungs being forced to inhale the foul air of an underground dungeon, their tender feet treading the moulding stones, their little bodies being bruised by contact with hard wooden benches, when they should be tucked into bed in a pure, wholesome atmosphere."

Unheard of impudence! Outrageous audacity! That a thief should dare to rise in open court and level such infamous slanders at a time-honored institution of San Francisco, within whose precincts better men than he had languished, suffered, sickened, and died without complaint! Away with him to his rightful place in the dark cell, where the slime oozes from the stones underfoot, and countless millions of bacteria, germs of untold disease, coat the walls!

Two officers hastened to the speaker's side and laid their hands roughly upon him, and the judge, taking advantage of the momentary check, interposed a mild remonstrance: —

"Really, Mr. King, you are entirely out of order."

Out of order, prisoner! A score of weighty cases are ready to be called. Opposite stands a gallant young member of the force, who captured a half-dozen opium lay-outs last night, and the eager people strain their eyes for a glimpse of the curious implements of intoxication, while a score of pig-tailed Mongolians wait to swell the city treasury

with their glittering double eagles, before starting out to ply their infamous trade in new and hidden quarters. The drunken Irishman, who hit his wife over the head with a billet of wood, has reserved a rich fund of Hibernian eloquence with which to regale the waiting audience, when he rises to speak in his own behalf. The red-faced, goggle-eyed hoodlum, who relieved a mansion on Van Ness Avenue of its newly manufactured heirloom of family plate last month, has engaged able counsel to argue in his behalf. The drunken sailor, robbed and beaten by a boarding-house keeper for refusing to ship on a deep-sea vessel, must be consigned to San Quentin for a goodly number of years, on the charge of employing a deadly weapon to resist the persuasions of his well-meaning friends, — fitting rebuke to a miscreant who has had the temerity to assert that the boarding-house runners are part and parcel of that honorable body, the United States Shipping Commission! The pair of yellow-haired courtesans will thankfully accept a month's incarceration in the House of Correction, to recuperate from the effect of last night's orgie. In the presence of weighty matters of this ilk, what claims has innocent childhood to the consideration of a tribunal of justice?

But what is this? The prisoner shaking off the detaining grasp of the officers, standing firm and erect in the dock, his eyes ablaze with indignation, and his voice ringing throughout the hall in warning and appeal.

"I invoke the humanity of our people, the honor

of this court, to see that this outrage upon civilization is no longer tolerated."

"Mr. King, I have no responsibility in the matter." The judge is constrained to answer the indictment at last. An angry murmur arises from the crowd, but the officers of the law are not slow to express their impatience and disgust.

Shameless effrontery! Brazen insolence! The prisoner yields at last to the fierce demands of the bailiff, and consents to be escorted to his subterranean residence.

And the children — stray lambs, lost for a time from the parental fold, while anguished mothers scour the streets in vain for a trace of the tiny wanderers! These little waifs, as well as the wee mischief-doers bred in unsavory precincts of the city, or juvenile outlaws who play on, forgetful that the fatal hour of eight has chimed, continue to be gathered into the reeking atmosphere of the prison, where all night long they occupy a cage in full view of the demons of drink and sin who are dragged in from the street. Their open cage adjoins another of similar construction, where sinning women make the air hideous with their blasphemous shouts. A night spent in this proximity is a liberal education in evil. A lifetime of patient schooling will not suffice to wipe away its lessons of degradation.

As the heavy iron door of the cell swung upon its hinges, King drew back with a questioning look, for another shelf had been let down at the side, and on the rude bunk a man reclined in an easy atti-

tude, his head resting in his hand. The guard, a man thoroughly imbued with the dignity of his position, was unable to conceal his disgust at this unconscious movement of the prisoner he had in tow.

"Get in and be d—d, you devil of an aristocrat! Want the city to furnish you with a high-toned suite of rooms, all to yourself, don't you? Next thing, you 'll be calling for oysters and chicken salad — yes, and plum-pudding, by ginger!"

Unheeding the turnkey's bullying tone, King had walked quietly into the cell, and heard the key click in the lock. The newcomer had risen to his feet, with the air of a man accustomed to a punctilious observance of the etiquette of prison life, and with a gracious sweep of his hand waived his claim to the stool which constituted the solitary furniture of the apartment. King obeyed this silent invitation, and the two men steadily regarded each other. The stranger was a man not far from his own age, with a frank, good-natured face, and a head that bespoke much latent intellectual capacity of a practical, prosaic character. His coarse, sandy hair was cropped close to his head, a suspicion of a reddish beard adorned his chin and upper lip, and when he spoke there was a slight trace of the mother brogue in his utterance. His genial blue eyes searched King's face with the slow dawn of recognition, which widened into a startled look that was not without a tinge of self-congratulation.

"Ef it ain't Phil King!"

King greeted the announcement with a puzzled

expression, and tried to think where he had met the man before, conning over the list of itinerant gardeners and journeymen who had been at one time and another in his father's employ, but was forced to concede that his memory was at fault. A shade of annoyance passed over his comrade's face.

"Now don't be after sayin' ye can't rimimber, Master Phil. Rest a bit, while I give your thinkin' machinery a lift. Recollect whin you lived at the old place at the Mission, — the big house with the iron fence and the young deer on the lawn? Right. And a block further down the strate was the small corner-grocery, where the women of the neighborhood wint for flour and sugar and saleratus, and the men for their beer and baccy. Good! Now don't ye mind the avenin' one summer that you stepped in on some triflin' errand, quite late, — the first night of the big fair for St. Francis's Chapel, on Twenty-Fourth and Valencia, and the Industrial School band — seein' it were a worthy relaygious charity — was sint over there to play?"

King's face brightened with the recurrence of some long-forgotten recollection, and his cell-mate burst into a low, exulting laugh.

"I thought I 'd bring the thing back bright as day, Master Phil. Lord, how you did give it to the old rascal that kept the shop, and promise howly retribution to the taycher that had us youngsters under his wing, for lettin' the old man set up the drinks for us little fellows! I can see Robinson now, white to the lips, and shakin' in his boots for

fear you 'd betray him, and he 'd be losin' his foine salary. Lord bless ye, 't was n't the first time the band had washed down their throats with beer and whiskey, nor the last time nayther, by a long shot."

He was silent for a moment, then resumed his good-natured and garrulous talk.

"Not that I 'd be after talkin' in an uncivil way of an institution so dear to the citizens at large, and so profitable to the politaycians of the city, as the one I 'm namin'. Sure I 'd be an ungrateful chap to do so, for there I was housed and fed and clothed, and taught after the fashion of the divil's own heart, a matter of fourteen odd years. Of course you know, Master Phil, being born and bred in this glorious city, that when the law claps its hand on a lad for any little roguery, he 's sent to the school till he 's twenty-one, unless belike he has somebody with a bit o' influence in the ward to intersayde for him with the supervisors. My old mother might as well have tried to swape back the waves of the sea with her broom as to move them with her pitiful cries. I served out my sintence, Master Phil, barring a couple of weeks skulkin' round the sand-hills, when a brace of us managed to scale the wall one dark night, to our everlastin' misery when we were hauled back. A nice pill, now, was n't it, sir, for touching a match to a pile of straw in the back yard at home, with niver a thought of the wooden fence that was too near? Fourteen years in that stinkin' puddle of wickedness, by the side of which the state prison is a day-

cent and respectable place! and begorry I ought to know, for I 've had a fair trial of both, and am in a fair way to go up the bay agin," and he laughed carelessly.

"But sure, Master Phil, if you did n't kape account of the blowing-up you gave the band-master, you 'll be after seeing my name quite frequent in the papers. And did you niver notice what was said of the doin's of Stubbs, the housebreaker?" He spoke in an indifferent tone, and his companion failed to observe the eager pride in his face, the anxiety with which he awaited a reply.

"I don't recollect, I 'm sure," said King.

"Oh, but think a moment, sir! Michael Stubbs, ailyus Mickey the Irishman, ailyus Red-headed Jack, ailyus Stubbs, the crack burglar of the coast. Ha'in't you niver heard none of them names?"

Stubbs was well nigh frantic with disappointment and humiliation. Had a lifetime of consistent rascality and unremitting defiance of the law of the land then been ineffectual to lift him above the obscurity of the common herd? Were fame and distinction such worthless baubles that one of his own townsmen could not so much as recognize any of his varied appellations?

"I think," said King, slowly, "that I have heard of Red-headed Jack. Did n't he have something to do with that affair at Colonel Windom's on Pine Street, some weeks ago, when a complete sweep was made of all the gas and plumbing fixtures in the house, during the family's absence?"

The burglar slapped his knee as a token of his hearty satisfaction.

"Right you are, sir! Here 's the boy that did that very job."

King had listened idly to these queer biographical reminiscences and libelous reflections upon one of San Francisco's most venerated institutions, speculating upon the inherent qualities and outward influences which had contributed to mould a character seemingly so destitute of the ordinary instincts of manhood as to stand confessed of a career without a single redeeming act or trace of honest ambition. He was surprised to see the careless manner thrown off like a mask.

"An' now, Master Phil, for what have the divils been takin' you up?"

It was so plain that his fellow-prisoner conceived him to be the victim of some base conspiracy, that King felt unaccountably embarrassed and humiliated. It was by no means a pleasant duty to confess his guilt to a man who had evidently for years regarded him as an example of fearless moral heroism.

"It is n't an agreeable thing to be or to tell, Stubbs. Two months ago I had a position of trust in the Bank of Yerba Buena. To-day I am here for making away with funds under my charge."

"But you niver did it!"

Stubbs's voice held a menace as well as an emphatic denial. King felt himself weakening. It was difficult to muster a vigorous feeling of partisanship in the advocacy of his own guilt.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Stubbs," he said, weakly, "but I can't deny the truth. I 'm sure I 'd be only too glad if it was n't so."

"Do you think I don't know a thafe when I see him?" demanded Stubbs, with a rare mixture of sternness and drollery. "Sure I 've the opportunity of lookin' at one of the rogues ivery mornin' of my life that I 've a glass to dress by. No, Master Phil, you can't fool an old hand like me. You niver laid a finger on the money. You 're takin' the blame for somebody else."

This unexpected mark of confidence from a man he had never seen in his life but once before affected King. He made a final effort to convince the housebreaker of his criminality.

"I wish with all my heart that your faith was better founded, Stubbs. Three months ago it would have made me very happy to know that a stranger would believe in me under such suspicious circumstances. Now, I should be a worse scoundrel than I am if I allowed you to think me innocent. I took the money myself. Nobody else had part or parcel in the deed."

"Thin," said the housebreaker, rising to his feet, his face dark and wrathful, "there is a woman in the case."

King had no reply to make to this charge. The face that haunted him day and night rose again before his vision, fair and winning in its beauty. Stubbs saw that his accusation had struck home.

"Curse 'em! Curse 'em!" he muttered. "Don't they bring damnation enough to men already on the road to hell, to leave the honest ones alone?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SENTENCE OF THE LAW.

THE prominent social position of the culprit, the irreproachable character he had hitherto sustained, together with the daring nature of the theft, and the commercial standing of the corporation he had so adroitly victimized, invested King's case with considerable celebrity.

The beginning of the trial in the district court was a field-day for the newspapers, whose representatives made up a goodly delegation, noting each shade of emotion that passed over the prisoner's face, and carefully treasuring every scrap of gossip bearing upon his social life. Many refined people, in whose families Philip King had been a frequent and welcome visitor, were annoyed beyond measure at seeing their names paraded before the public as intimate associates of the dashing young malefactor. King made his appearance unattended by counsel, but when the full text of the charge was read, and he learned that he was accused of the embezzlement of twenty-five thousand dollars, he begged leave to amend his former plea, answering only to the appropriation of two-fifths of the specified sum.

This proceeding brought down upon him not a

little ridicule and resentment. It was really very amusing for the confessed thief of thousands to stand upon ceremony regarding so small a matter. The judge, who had forecast a quick trial and swift settlement of the suit, and had arranged the cases upon his docket accordingly, was vexed almost beyond endurance. The lawyers, disgusted from the first at the prisoner's weak capitulation, which deprived them of an opportunity for the cunning cross-examination and masterly sifting of testimony anticipated at the outset, were in no degree mollified by this new turn of affairs, which threatened to divert their talents from the oratorical channel in which they could be exerted to the best advantage, and condemn them to a tedious quest after the disposition of the missing funds. The bank officials, smarting under the outrageous betrayal of trust by a man in whom they had placed implicit confidence, were incensed anew by the obstinacy with which he tried to force upon them a paradoxical theory. Aside from King, only three men had access to the bank safe, and each of the three had a direct interest in the safe and honorable conduct of the affairs of the institution. Two of them, the president and cashier, had a heavy capital invested. The third, Henry Dartmoor, was a man whose honor was above question. Up to the time of King's sudden flight not a breath of suspicion had ever attached to an employee of the bank, and the directors had mentioned the fact from time to time with commendable pride, and pointed with gratification to their ever-increasing list of depos-

itors, — infallible witness to the confidence of the community.

Many who had been King's personal friends went to him and urged him to confess the disposition he had made of the surplus sum, arguing that the legal penalty would be in nowise altered, and that to a wealthy corporation like the bank the appropriation of the greater sum would appear no more heinous than the peculation of the less. Even Dartmoor, failing in his good-natured attempt to save his friend from the humiliation of penal disgrace, counseled him to make a clean breast of the whole transaction. But the prisoner remained obdurate.

At the end of the first day's proceedings, King's fellow-prisoner received him with eager expectancy. Failing to receive a voluntary confidence from his mate, his curiosity escaped restraint.

"Was she there?" he anxiously queried.

"She! Who?"

"She — the woman."

"No."

"Have to keep out of the way for fear she 'll git nabbed by the cops?"

"Look here, Stubbs," said King, with dignified resentment, "don't you ever refer to this matter again in such a fashion. You don't understand the case at all. She has done nothing."

"Jist like the rest of thim, — clane gone on her, and no use prachin' to him," sagely commented the housebreaker. "Thinks there 's not another girl alive fit to step in her shoes, and all that sort of

stuff. But you hear me, Master Phil, some of thim 'll show a hape of grit, stickin' to their men through thick and thin. There 's Jimmy Black's little girl, Hepsy, — the boys call her Hep for short, — she 's the one that niver missed a day when he was up for crackin' Goodhue's safe last year; and when he went off on the boat — a triflin' business of my own called me up to San Quentin the same day — there was the young craytur on the pier kissin' the bracelets on his wrists, if you 'll belayve me, and the last thing we saw was her wavin' her handkerchief that was drippin' with her tears. While this girl of yours — the ungrateful, traycherous hussy! has " —

Stubbs had no opportunity to complete his sentence. King sprang to his feet, his face livid with passion, and twisting his hand in the burglar's collar, gave him a kick that stretched him full length upon the floor.

A turnkey in the passage outside heard the sound of the fall, and rushing to the door, peered through the grating, only to see King standing with blazing eyes at the side of the cell, while Stubbs, with a dazed look, raised himself to a sitting posture on the floor.

" What 's the row in there? You two trying to murder each other?"

" Nary a bit, my friend! " jovially responded the housebreaker. " You see, my airly education 's been niglicted, and Mr. King here 's been givin' me a lissen in eticat. Try him yourself some day. Your manners are in nade of improvement."

To the few who believed King's statements, the trial presented a curious and pathetic spectacle. On the one hand the young fellow, so lately an honored and respected member of society, whose self-reproach could be augmented by no legal edict or popular verdict, standing alone and defenseless, bowed down beneath the humiliating consciousness of crime, eager only to have the trial ended and sentence passed, that he might shoulder his burden of shame and penance and apply himself to a philosophical solution of the problem of existence. The distrust and contempt with which his statements were received at times appeared to confuse his mind, and render him incapable of intelligent reflection; but he aided the prosecution to the full extent of his power, recounting with painful exactitude the story of his misdeeds; relating, like a man in the toils of some hideous dream, his initial steps in dishonesty; exhibiting in open court a small account-book, wherein the various sums he had appropriated and disbursed were entered with absurd fidelity, — for, like many another rascal who has robbed his master and met his deserts at the hands of the law, his original design had evidently been to merely borrow the money for purposes of speculation, and to replace it before its loss should be detected. So far as they went, his statements were corroborated by his brokers, — honest men, as stock-brokers go, and in no wise accountable for the unexpected depression of the market, which betrayed the young man's hopes and demolished his golden visions. He went to a certain point

with his confessions, but no farther, being apparently unmoved by entreaties or threats, or the scornful attitude of the prosecuting attorneys, who on the other hand met his frank acknowledgments with incredulous smiles and open sarcasm. Dartmoor, who was repeatedly called to the stand on behalf of the prosecution, gave his testimony with manifest reluctance and a confessed regard for the prisoner, which touched the latter, and aroused the sympathy of spectators.

When two weeks passed, the prosecution, employing the sharpest detectives and most able attorneys, failed to discover the slightest trace of the missing money, and resolved to abandon the search.

Throughout the community and among his business associates, the general opinion prevailed that King had either cached the missing sum for future use, or that some shameful secret, which he feared to disclose, was connected with its disappearance Some of his male companions, with the light disregard of morality which young men delight to affect before a large experience of life has taught them to value honesty and purity in every relation, laughingly repeated Stubbs's assertion that there was a woman in the case, and were disposed to look upon King's sin more leniently, believing him to have shared in the almost universal defilement that tarnishes the nobility of California manhood.

The court had no time or inclination for speculation upon such themes. For many reasons it was desirable that the trial should be brought to a speedy issue. The complaint was amended, the

prisoner was promptly convicted of the embezzlement of ten thousand dollars, and one sultry September day sentence was passed upon him.

The judge who presided over the court in which Philip King was tried, and whose province in our tale has hitherto been to sit with lofty dignity upon his elevated throne, to listen gravely to the evidence, and rule upon trivial points of law, was a man of remarkable character. Possessed of rare legal acumen, a finely balanced and judicial mind, he added to these traits an impressive personal presence, and oratorical gifts that had early achieved distinction for him in his pleadings at the bar. Upon the bench he discharged his duties with a fidelity that for the time divested him of every personal sympathy and human weakness, meting out justice to evil-doers with such an unsparing and impartial hand that he had become the terror of the criminal class, and was known far and near as the "Iron Judge."

There was something leonine in his aspect as he prepared to pass sentence upon the prisoner, — in his massive head, his corrugated brow, his Roman nose and inflated nostrils, — his sullen eye brooding with the portent of a coming storm. As he swept the court-room with his glance the prisoner quailed beneath his look, a wave of excitement passed over the spectators, and the lawyers shriveled with an humbling realization of their petty aims, their unworthy subterfuges, their greed and insincerity.

He began with a review of the testimony that

had been presented during the trial, — a recital so mechanical in composition, so emotionless in its analysis, so metallic in utterance, that a superficial hearer would have predicted a calm and dispassionate conclusion; yet when he had finished his summary, the criminal breach of faith, in all its black hideousness, was imprinted on every heart. The judge paused, reaching out his hand to take up a small volume of the criminal code of the State, fluttering the leaves with a contemptuous motion, then tossing the book back to its original place.

"In the face of the conclusive proof that has been presented during this trial, and his own unqualified confession as well, I can do no less than find the prisoner guilty of the charge. Guilty! An unscrupulous thief, lost to all principles of honor, treacherous to those who have befriended him, a moral firebrand among his associates! Guilty! But what can we do with him?

"What is the extreme penalty of the law for his offense? Ten years of idleness in the penitentiary of the State, comfortably housed, well fed, neatly clothed, treated with more consideration and respect than the average honest laborer of our city, under a discipline less rigid than that of the private soldier, virtually unrestricted in his communications with family and friends, and with an excellent chance of being pardoned out on the next change of administration. What terrors does such a doom hold for the criminal?

"Our system of prison management is radically wrong. Unless our prison directors imbibe suffi-

cient severity of doctrine to make the institutions under their charge a deterrent influence upon ill-doers instead of a refuge for paupers and law-breakers, the criminal element of our State will increase with such rapidity that it will overwhelm the land, and erase every vestige of virtue and honor.

"I regard the prisoner at the bar as one of the most pernicious examples ever presented to the youth of our fair city. He is a moral leper in the community, whose career will exert an infectious influence wherever its knowledge extends. The excellent character he has hitherto borne, instead of constituting a redeeming feature of the case, renders his crime the more heinous, and his example the more perilous to society. While applying the utmost rigor of the law, and condemning him to serve ten years behind the bars of San Quentin, I have no hesitation in saying that if it were in my power to increase the severity of the legal penalty of his crime, I would stipulate that he should be placed in solitary confinement, and sentence him for life."

The judge wiped his forehead as he concluded. Attorneys smiled their appreciation of one of the most unique opinions ever delivered in a California court. No one who looked upon the inexorable face of the Iron Judge would have credited the fact that not a month before, discovering a systematic series of petty thefts on the part of his own confidential clerk, — peculations extending over a term of years, — he had not disdained to shed a tear or

so in secret, and had dismissed the fellow with a fatherly admonition, offering him a free field in which to retrieve his misdeeds. Precept and practice do not always go hand in hand, particularly when the precept inculcates a lesson of stern justice, and a great heart rules the man.

And the prisoner, the reprehensible sinner who added to his other iniquities the unpardonable crime of possessing a hitherto unblemished moral character? Score another in the black category of his sins!

Not content with sapping the moral foundations of San Francisco society, he must conclude his public career with a lame spectacular effect. Shameful prostitution of dramatic purpose! Nauseous appeal to the sympathy of the spectators! Puerile exhibition of physical weakness! Overcome by an appalling realization of the consequences of his crime, weighed down with a hopeless sense of the degradation he has incurred, the rascal has fainted in the dock.

CHAPTER V.

IMPRISONMENT.

DURING the brief interval that elapsed between the passing of King's sentence and its execution, Stubbs had been tried and convicted before another tribunal. Both prisoners were arraigned for trial in a hapless period. The rapid growth of crime throughout the State, the contemptuous disregard of the laws evinced by criminals high and low, attributed to the wanton miscarriage of justice in the cases of several notorious offenders, had so incensed the people that they had risen in a solid phalanx at the last election. Eschewing the delicate political apparatus of the primaries, they had seated on the bench a body of men of stern fibre and unimpeachable integrity, pledged to carry out the laws in their most stringent application. Under such circumstances, Stubbs's bold career as criminal and outlaw served him ill, and after a scathing denunciation from the bench — a dissertation to which the housebreaker listened with an expression of affable approval — the evil hand of well-deserved Fate descended upon him, and the State adopted him as its ward for a term of twenty years.

The two men set out together upon their journey one rainy autumn day, their wrists linked together

by a stout steel chain, — outer emblem of the subtle bond of crime, — moving down an obscure side street, under convoy of a deputy sheriff. King walked the pavement with a mechanical tread, looking neither to right nor left, apparently wrapt in sad meditation. The chill of his companion's mood seemed to infect the other prisoner's happy spirit, overclouding his jolly face and checking his customary volubility.

No sympathetic convention of friends with noisy demonstrations of regret, no parting mementos of affection or good-will, marked their departure from their native city into long and ignominious exile. Even the housebreaker's boon companions, whose profession may be assumed to have afforded them ample leisure by day, and who hailed with avidity every occasion that admitted of boisterous celebration, guided either by motives of delicacy toward their luckless comrade or a wholesome dread of venturing in too close proximity to the minions of the law, gave the trio a wide berth.

As they reached the wharf and stood outside the ferry gate, their progress delayed by a lock of vehicles, King felt a cordial slap on his shoulder, and turned to see a huge fellow in a rough gray suit, armed with the accoutrements of a freshly returned traveler.

"How are you, King?"

"Home again, Rutherford?"

The traveler did not observe the flush of shame that darkened the young man's face, the embarrassed tone that distinguished his greeting.

"We 've had a capital three months' outing, — a fine lot of specimens, I assure you. But mountaineering is rough business in wet weather, and I 'm glad to be back again."

He spoke with a hearty candor that was good to hear, and King's heart failed him as he met his friend's true and honest eyes.

"What 's up? A hunt up country? You should be differently rigged out for such weather," significantly touching the young man's light suit.

With a despairing gesture King raised his right hand, and the glittering steel bracelet came into view, while the pendent links rattled a dismal accompaniment to this act. His friend recoiled, overcome with indignation and disgust.

"What wretched buffoonery is this, King?" he demanded, sternly.

"I tell you it is no buffoonery. It is the awful reality," insisted the miserable man.

"No talking to prisoners, sir. Beg pardon, but them 's my orders."

The deputy touched his hat civilly to the transgressor as he spoke, for he recognized an old and well-beloved citizen of San Francisco, whose scientific achievements rendered him illustrious throughout two continents.

Overcome by the shock of the intelligence, John Rutherford allowed the party to pass on without further parley. King did not lift his head again until they stood on the boat and a hoarse steam whistle announced her departure. Then he scanned the loiterers on the wharf. There was the usual quota

of water-front officials, clad in dark uniforms with shining brass buttons, and moving about with pompous authority. Empty express wagons were driven noisily off in the direction of the city. A few well-dressed people lingered on the pier, waving farewell to friends on board the steamer. One figure alone attracted his attention. It was that of a woman who had sought shelter from curious gaze in a retired nook of the wharf, at the rear of a huge freight warehouse. Clad in a long gray cloak that concealed the outlines of her form, with the hood drawn closely about her face, she was half leaning against, half clinging to a stout pile that rose above the edge of the pier. As the boat swung around on her course, he caught a fleeting glimpse of the woman's face, and for the moment — so powerful are the optical illusions sometimes wrought by the fancies of a disordered brain, so distinctly are such fancies sometimes photographed upon the actual vision — he could have sworn that it was the face of Margaret Thaxter, the girl who had unwittingly worked his ruin.

He had prepared to encounter a new world at the prison, foreign in appearance, antipodal in tastes, distinct in character, impulses, and temperament, from the mould of society in which his lot had been cast. He found himself one of a large community typifying in a marked degree the great world of which each had at some time been a component part. Victims of misguided passions or of moral weakness, their brotherhood in crime had not

served to rend the tie which bound them in close fellowship with the entire human race, although the brutal and ignorant element preponderated. He met the shrewd lawyer, who had suborned testimony in a wealthy client's case, and had himself fallen into the clutches of the very law he had invoked; the prosaic farmer, whose mind not even the commission of a double murder could divert from the discussion of the exact line of the fruit belt and the relative merits of different schemes of irrigation; the man of philosophy, who had inadvertently become a polygamist in the development of his theory of spiritual affinities; the man of science, who had been caught cribbing a cask of alcohol, for the preservation of specimens, from the cellar of a railroad king, in a virtuous effort to avenge the injustice of the prohibitory freight tariff imposed by the company upon scientific collections designed for purposes of exchange; dapper government clerks, who had put their signatures to vouchers for other men's salaries; clergymen, whose principles had proven too elastic for their offices; managers of tontine insurance companies, whose financiering abilities had proven inferior to their mathematical powers; bankers, who had engaged in disastrous speculations, — men of every known profession and calling, reduced to one common plane by the dread leveler of crime.

He was astonished at the number of familiar faces that greeted him. One by one, and through the commission of various iniquities, they had dropped out of the circles that had known them,

and no one had cared to enumerate them. A California Street broker of prestige in the flush days of the passing decade occupied the cell next to his own. He recognized in the dishwasher a darky who had served him daily for a couple of years in a fashionable Pine Street coffee-house. A hack-driver named Burke, against whose extortions he had once protected a couple of ladies, — a mild species of highway robbery, which Burke pursued with such success that he afterwards took to the road in genuine professional form, — was under life sentence, and had risen to the proud post of trusty, a position which afforded fine opportunity for the exercise of personal spite. Before the expiration of his term King had for a neighbor the retiring secretary of the light-house commission, — a genial and popular fellow, whose pardon for a gross malfeasance in office was the last official act of a retiring President of the Union.

King was by no means popular among his fellow-prisoners. He did not possess the elasticity of temperament which might have enabled him to laugh away his disgrace, forgetful of the past and careless of the future; nor was he hypocrite enough to feign a lightness of heart that he did not feel. His tidy personal habits, his habitual reserve, his honest and straightforward course, united with his decency of speech and manner, alienated him from the vulgar and unlettered rabble, although a quiet and undemonstrative friendship grew up between him and others, who, like himself, had permitted the weakness of a moment to blight the promise of a lifetime.

Toward the officers of the prison who came most in contact with his daily life, he occupied the unfortunate relation of a man whom circumstance and his own error had placed in an attitude of the most humiliating subordination, but who was nevertheless their superior in education and breeding. With the suspicion of coarse natures, they were ready to misinterpret and distort his most inoffensive act. His unfailing obedience to their rules was construed into a derisive recognition of their power; his respectful courtesy seemed a cloak for hidden mockery; his taciturnity was translated to signify the bitterness of contempt.

Stubbs, on the other hand, was on terms of the most cordial friendship with every one within the grounds, from the surliest turnkey to the gruffest of his fellow-prisoners. His jolly face, genial manner, and spontaneous wit made him a general favorite. To him the penalty he had incurred possessed no element of embarrassment or terror. The needs of his nature were by no means exacting. A whole roof above his head, warmth and plenty, and a crowd at hand who could appreciate the merits of a good story made up the sum total of the demands of his existence. It is true that the curtailment of his liberty was something of a hardship to a man of his temperament, but it is possible that within the hidden depths of his soul he realized his utter instability and incapacity to cope with temptation, his total inability to serve any good use in the economy of civilization. Opposed to this philosophic consolation was the prospect that some of his ardent

friends outside might contrive to procure the exercise of executive clemency, — a possibility which introduced into his somewhat monotonous life an agreeable and exciting element. He realized, in a dim way, that some subtle difference in the fabric of King's inner being created demands which were beyond his comprehension, and prevented his friend from finding solace in the vulgar comforts that served his use; but he never guessed the bitter inner conflict that raged within the young fellow's soul, the sickening repulsion that crept over him, the utter impossibility of assimilation with the coarse natures by whom he was surrounded. There were times when it seemed as if the monotonous routine of daily duty, the changeless scene, the sight of the same discouraged and sullen faces, would drive King mad. But he resolutely denied his impatience all outward demonstration, and thereby scored a victory over himself that was never entered on the prison records, and endowed him with a power of self-control that served him well in after days. He sometimes comforted himself with the thought that during the years of his imprisonment there might arise an opportunity for valorous action or self-sacrifice, by which he might assert his manhood and offset the unhappy deed that weighed him down in public estimation; but he was destined to be one of the silent majority of penitents whose sacrifices are never reckoned, whose victories are unseen.

The chance for which King had vaguely longed arrived in due course of time, and passed him by.

When, several years after the date of his incarceration, a fire broke out in the warden's house, it was Stubbs who luckily chanced to be on the outside, who recognized the peril and the need, who grasped the momentary danger of insurgency, and realized the frightful consequences if an army of over a thousand criminals should break loose; who seized a rifle dropped by an excited guard, and mounting the broad wall which served as a beat for the sentries, aided by several brave and determined men, quelled a riot in its inception, and organized a valiant and reliable company of volunteers to fight the devastating element; Stubbs, who boldly made his way where the blaze was fiercest and the heat most intolerable, who incited others to courageous deeds by his own intrepid example, and, when the flames were finally vanquished, was led from the spot with singed hair and eyebrows, scarred face, and blinded eyes.

While these exciting events transpired, King was lying in the hospital, safely removed from all danger of conflagration, delirious in the clutches of a low malarial fever. His first conscious act was to read an official document aloud to a fellow-prisoner who wandered through the ward with bandaged eyes. The fellow-convict was Stubbs. The paper, which bore the governor's signature, was a free and unconditional pardon.

King made the most of the occasion, and during the quiet days that followed had many serious talks with the housebreaker in relation to the errors of his past life and the possibilities open before

him. Stubbs heard him without demur, assenting to his admonitions with a rare mixture of integrity of purpose and laxity of principle that undermined King's gravity. When his eyesight became finally restored, and there was no longer any excuse for delaying his departure, Stubbs evinced a singular disinclination to avail himself of his freedom, and when at length, after repeated false starts, he stood at last, bundle in hand, on the threshold of the sick-ward, he regarded his friend with wistful eyes.

"What is it, Stubbs?" said King.

Stubbs cleared his throat vigorously, decided to rest his weight upon one foot, then shifted it to the other.

"If it 's not askin' too much, is it sure you are, Mr. King, that you 'll kape straight while I 'm gone?"

The absurdity of the appeal, coming from such a source, the unconscious implication that the speaker's absence would be a temporary episode, stirred King's sense of humor.

"If I was half as sure of you, my boy! You 've got a brand-new start, Stubbs. Apply that pluck and obstinate determination of yours in the right direction, and there is n't anything you can't accomplish. Your gallant behavior at the fire has made you a host of friends among influential people. Stand up on the strength of that, and, above all things, keep yourself clear of any entanglement with the old gang."

"And indade I 'll do the same, sir," replied the pardoned convict, with dignity. "It 's ashamed

I'd be to be reckoned amongst the boys these days, the way they do their work in San Francisco. I'd smile to see myself spakin' to chaps that go through a house the way Billy Coogan and his pals handled the Widow Green's place on Mission Street, the other night, raisin' a cry of fire in the street and sneakin' through the hallways, grabbin' overcoats and seal-skin sacks and ivery thing that could be aisily idintified, whin there was the alleyway, quiet and convanient by night, an' a thin-bladed knife as would undo the fastenin's of the butler's pantry, an' a cool thousand dollars of rale old family plate in the closet, that could be melted down in no time. It 's a cryin' disgrace to the profession."

Strong as was Stubbs's determination to lead an honest life, his ambition to show Billy Coogan and his pals a specimen of really artistic work in the line of their mutual profession was stronger. One night, some six weeks later, as he was departing from Vanderheyden's jewelry manufactory, laden with a rich booty of watches and brooches, he walked into the arms of a couple of policemen, whom a hidden burglar alarm had summoned to the spot. A month later he was receiving the cordial greetings of his old comrades in San Quentin, and the sly taunts of Billy Coogan and his gang.

During the brief period of Stubbs's retirement from the world, the judiciary of his native city had twice undergone a change. Satiated with their former triumph, the more intelligent of the citizens had relapsed into their customary state of indifference to matters political, and the "bosses" again

took undisputed possession of the field. The worthy incumbents of the bench, who had served their constituencies faithfully for a brief period, were summarily deposed, to be replaced by men who were in some instances their peers in loyalty of purpose and purity of principle, but who possessed more pliable natures. Under these happy auspices, Stubbs's good-humored pleasantry, his frank contrition, his philosophical view of the situation, and his eloquent promises of reformation, so impressed the court, that upon his fifth conviction for burglary he was let off with a few words of gentle admonition and a five years' sentence.

The skepticism with which Stubbs had first regarded King's confession of guilt had succumbed to the latter's unwavering insistence, but as the housebreaker progressed from avowed incredulity to unwilling conviction, to his simple mind King stood forth as a tangible promise of moral regeneration, and all his own hopes of reformation were staked upon his friend's perseverance in an upright path. Like the single-hearted devotee of a Catholic country, who watches his sculptured saint with unflagging vigilance, fearful lest wind or weather, or the impious hands of heretics, should mar its noble lines or disfigure its chiseled beauty, Stubbs followed King's movements in open apprehension that the corrupt atmosphere of prison life might undermine his virtuous resolves or taint his spiritual nature.

On his return to the penitentiary the reprobate redoubled his vigilance, for it seemed as if the lower he sank, and the more hopeless the conviction of

his own fallibility, the more King's integrity became a question of fearful moment. The very fact that the latter had placed a strict embargo upon the introduction of vulgar or profane language in their intercourse together increased the wondering respect with which Stubbs regarded him, and served to distinguish him above all the rest of his associates.

On the rare occasions when King departed from his customary reserve to speak words of earnest advice to the housebreaker, reminding him of the possibilities of good still before him, and pointing out the incentives that existed for an honest life, his auditor heard him with undisguised delight, less moved by the substance of the appeal than by the quietus to his own misgivings.

"Good for you, Master Phil," he would respond on such occasions. "I'll stake my bottom dollar ivery time on a man that can prache like that."

Years of hard toil, of patient endeavor, of upright action, steadily adhered to in spite of the atmosphere by which he was surrounded; weeks of sickness on a hard cot in a stifling ward, watched by compulsory attendants, whose ruling consideration was how best to evade any overstress of duty; hoping, striving, working for an honorable release at the earliest lawful date; counting up the credits allowed by law for good behavior, and reckoning the days of freedom they represented; and when six years and one month had passed and King looked forward to certain discharge some eight weeks thence — an excavation was discovered in a wall of

masonry, and the instruments that performed the work were found concealed beneath the bedding in his cell. The credits accumulated by years of patient labor and consistent obedience were wiped away in a moment, and four years more of hopeless endurance succeeded.

When the knowledge of the prolongation of his sentence came upon King, the courage and patience that had hitherto sustained him yielded to the unexpected strain. It would be impossible to convey any adequate conception of what those last four years represented to the weary and heartsick man. Each day of the first twelve months was in itself an infinite cycle, which dragged its interminable length along a course beset with torment and shadowed by the darkness of despair.

He sometimes wondered that he did not abandon all restraint, and become one of the reckless, unscrupulous, blaspheming throng about him. He accredited his self-command to constitutional aversion rather than any heroic principle of action. By degrees the galling sense of injustice, the miserable consciousness of valuable time consumed in needless sacrifice, ceased to sway his mind, and the same stoical calm that had distinguished him during the earlier years of his imprisonment was restored.

In the prison library he spent many profitable hours, delving among its dregs of worthless literature for stray volumes of interest and worth, or culling from its dry theological tomes occasional pearls of thought and stimulating sentiment. The last year of his confinement he was called upon to

labor in a new field. The child convicts, from ten to fourteen years of age, sentenced by the district courts of interior counties for the heinous crimes of horse-stealing, burglary, grand larceny, and the ilk, were segregated from the older prisoners and gathered into a little day-school, under the auspices of the good old chaplain. King was requested to assist in this work, and labored efficiently and well. It is said that the only professions of penitence or regret that ever fell from his lips — for in after life he was a man of deeds rather than words — were uttered during his ministrations among these erring youths.

In the early days of his imprisonment his mother was stricken down with a slow and wasting disease. The faithful affection and encouragement that she was unable to express in person were conveyed to him through the medium of her letters. Could the Iron Judge have been aware of the influence exerted by these tender missives, he would have conceded the fallacy of one of his foremost tenets of penitentiary government. These messages of love and hope were the prisoner's sole stimulus to good in an atmosphere thick with the taint of corruption. They steeled him against temptation and rendered him proof against sin. More than all, the constant reminder that the world still held one whose trust in him was unshaken, and who looked to the future with a tender dependence upon his aid, preserved alive within his soul that precious spark of immortal fire which men call self-respect, and which is the very germ and essence of all human progress.

A letter from John Rutherford was delivered to him during the first month of his imprisonment, and its contents were treasured in his heart. It was short and terse, with a subdued vigor of meaning characteristic of the man, and read as follows:

PHILIP KING, San Quentin — My Dear Boy: Nothing that has passed has served to alter my friendship. There are some who have faith that you will prove the master of circumstances, and achieve a noble record yet. Bear this in mind, and when you return, do not fail to call upon your sincere friend,

JOHN RUTHERFORD.

CHAPTER VI.

RELEASE.

"My soul!"

The watchman on the wharf at San Quentin uttered the exclamation under his breath, as a man approached, walking slowly and wearily, and coming from the direction of the prison buildings. The officer had a good memory for faces, but he looked at the new-comer with a puzzled expression, started to address him, checked himself, then ventured a doubtful inquiry.

"Beg pardon, sir. You 're not Philip King?"

The man nodded an affirmative. The watchman looked at the dark hair thickly sprinkled with gray, the sunken cheeks, the hollow eyes, the contracted lines of the face, the thinned and stooping form. He repeated the ejaculation again, this time aloud, and with reinforced vigor, —

"My soul!"

He recalled the athletic, boyish figure that had descended the gangway of the steamer ten years before, the young and handsome face that had greeted him with a look of pathetic inquiry, the quick, impatient movements of the young fellow who had never known restraint, and contrasted him with this feeble spectre of a man, who bore a look of premature age. Yet there was a subtle some-

thing about the man, he could not for the life of him say what, that exerted a singular fascination, and commanded his respect as the boy had never done.

"Going back, sir?"

"Yes."

"Glad to hear it."

It was plain that the watchman desired to be sociable. After a pause he renewed the conversation.

"Standing here year in and year out, seeing men coming and going like so many bees, and being chaffed by all sorts of people, don't take away all the human feeling a body has. I'm free to confess I'd rather see a man going out than coming in."

This magnanimous concession elicited no comment from the freed convict, who was gazing out upon the bay to where a small steamer glided swiftly onward, nearing the pier with every revolution of her wheels. It was an October day. The air was fresh and mild. The clear blue sky looked down serenely upon its own reflection mirrored in the broad expanse of water, unbroken save where a light breeze dimpled the smooth surface with silvery ripples. Across the bay the crests of the purple hills of the Mount Diablo range were gilded by the morning sun.

As the boat approached the wharf several other passengers made their appearance, and one among them came quietly to King's side.

"Why, Stubbs, I thought you left a week ago."

"To be sure, Mr. King. But I could n't help feelin' I 'd make a better start like if I could go out with you. Belike it 'll sort o' brace me up, for you know it 's dead in arnist that I am this time."

As the boat swung from the dock the two men lingered on deck, and King looked back toward the grim quadrangle where the best ten years of his life had been spent. He left it without regret, but he thought sadly of several men in whose souls the honest leaven had long ago worked atonement for youthful crimes, and reflected upon the doom of Winchester Doyle, the life prisoner — instance of one of the most flagrant miscarriages of justice that ever disgraced a fair State — whom California had done the dual wrong of first condemning for a justifiable act of self-defense, and afterwards failed to compensate for noble service rendered the State in time of peril.

As the two men entered the upper cabin, King hesitated a moment before taking a seat on the plush cushions, and cast an uneasy glance about, as if expecting to hear a rough voice order him to join the chattering throng of Chinamen on the lower deck. He had put his hand in his pocket — it was a novel and delightful sensation to wear a decent suit once more — and, as he did so, his fingers came in contact with a small roll that had been handed him by the warden on his dismissal. He resumed conversation with the housebreaker.

"Take my advice, Stubbs. Cut San Francisco and your old cronies. Get off to a new place where you stand an equal chance with other men. Old associations will be too much for you here."

Stubbs scratched his head reflectively. "Should n't wonder if it was in the right you are, Mr. King, but it 's not an aisy thing to do. Travelin' on this coast costs a hape of money. Begorra! there 's that crib on Sutter Street me an' the boys was about to tackle when they hauled me in, last time. And if iver you see a nater job than I make" —

"Oh, Stubbs, Stubbs!" King was in despair. A promising beginning, indeed, for the rascal to be planning another robbery the first ten minutes after his embarkation.

"Where 's the money they gave you when you were discharged?"

"Money! An' how many miles will five dollars carry a man, to say nothin' of four days' livin' taken out of it already?"

Stubbs's astonishment paralyzed him for a moment. King sat silently thinking. The sum he received then must have been deposited by his mother. A sudden whim moved him.

"Have you any spare change about you, Stubbs? I may want a little myself when I get down to the city."

The housebreaker plunged his hand into his pocket and drew out a small handful of silver, the sum and substance of his worldly possessions. King watched him narrowly, and hastily counted over the pieces. There was a half-dollar, two quarters, a dime, and a couple of nickels. Stubbs picked out one of the quarters and handed the balance to his friend, with the air of a prince of the crown. King deliberately pocketed it. Then he laid in Stubbs's great paw the roll he had drawn from his pocket.

"Be the powers! But that weighs down solid."

"Take it, old boy."

"And what is it you 're takin' me for, Master Phil?"

Amazement, incredulity, admiration of King's generosity and virtuous self-denial, passed in quick procession over Stubbs's open countenance as he resolutely extended the roll to his friend. But King had thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, and looked a decided negative to the other's attempts to make restoration.

"Now, Stubbs, be reasonable," he remonstrated. "Let me have my way, like a good fellow. This money will carry you away from temptation, and you will have a chance to begin an honest life. I am determined to start just where I left off, and fight my way up single-handed. I want no odds from the world. I can never feel myself a man again until I have worked myself unaided from the pit into which I deliberately plunged." Lines of grim resolution displayed themselves about his mouth as he spoke, but he ended with a light jest. "If I fail, then I can apply to you, and out of the small fortune you will have amassed by that time down in New Mexico or Arizona, you can easily spare enough to help out an old friend."

The good-natured fellow's irresponsible temperament blossomed into glad certainty at the mere suggestion.

"By thunder, that I will! I 'll take up some government land and stock it with sheep; it 's the straight and aisy road to fortune. This is the time

I 'll be turnin' a new leaf in faith. And you shall be my partner, Master Phil. Cracky! how we 'll get on!"

The boat ran into a new slip, and all the surroundings were strange and unfamiliar. As the oddly assorted pair parted on the wharf, Stubbs laid his hand on King's arm with awkward affection.

"I suppose it 's no use talkin', Mr. King. But if you 'd only be makin' up your mind to kape clear of her."

"What?" King's thoughts had turned to prosaic subjects at that moment, and he was deciding in what direction he would go for a bath and shave before presenting himself at home.

"Her. The 'woman in the case.'" Stubbs's eyes twinkled as he recollected the abrupt terminus of their last discussion of the subject.

"You need have no concern on that point, Stubbs. Our paths have parted forever. She would n't so much as look at me if I met her in the street; and there is n't the slightest chance of my seeing her, for she 's over five thousand miles from here at this moment."

"Then you 're safe!" rejoined his companion, heartily, and turning on his heel, he disappeared in the great vortex of humanity which centred on lower Market Street.

The housebreaker's warning lingered in King's mind. The peril he had to apprehend was beyond Stubbs's comprehension, and consisted in the frailty of his own soul, which clung with unconquerable

tenacity to an illusive dream, to hopes that all decency demanded should have been buried ten years ago. He had tried to forget her, tried to ignore the fact that any such woman ever existed; but occasional references in his mother's letters, chance bits of newspaper gossip, and the treacherous weakness of his own heart, had kept her memory alive. But a short time previous to his release he had learned of her departure for Europe.

He trod the streets of the busy city, an exile returning to the place of his nativity after years of absence and separation, but, alas! a miserable and dishonored exile; wearing no cross of honor or proud decorations proclaiming sore penance valiantly undergone for his nation's sake, or heroic warfare in support of a noble principle; a man with lowered standard and despondent heart, deprived of the dearest rights of citizenship through willful disregard of his country's honored laws — sorry spectacle, indeed, for the honest crowd! Of the few who recognized him none stopped to speak, but one man thought he read back of the sensitive, shrinking face a hidden force of resolve which might yet prove the criminal's redemption. King only observed the president of the bank he had robbed, a man who had once honored him with implicit trust, but who now passed him with a single cutting glance and a distant recognition.

He struggled to free himself from oppressive recollections, and to uproot all unhealthy sentiment from his mind. The world was still green and beautiful; flowers of exquisite forms and hues flung

their perfume along the dusty highway; the voices of happy children echoed on every side; the sun bathed all the earth in gladness, and the air was full of the subtle suggestion of renewed growth and vigor that follows the first rains of the season. Hope and faith still remained for the erring, and as for him, had he not one dear and faithful friend to cheer and bless existence?

But one thought should have dominion in his mind that day. He was going home to his mother — his mother! whose love had never failed him during the long ordeal of sin and disgrace; who would welcome him with a brave face and consoling words, and who would rejoice in his successes, comfort him in discouragement, exult in his dearly won victories. He recalled the fabled story of Antæus, whose strength increased a hundredfold at every contact with mother earth, and felt that his own courage would spring into new vitality when his eyes rested upon that dear face. One touch of her hand, her kiss upon his cheek, and the haunting sense of misery and loss would be stifled, and he would be a man once more, ready to do, to dare, and to suffer.

There is no truth in the subtle undercurrent of foreboding which is fabled to presage impending sorrow. Philip King's heart was lighter than it had been for years as he neared his home. He was at the gate before he observed that the unusual blockade of vehicles in the street centred at his father's house. No suspicion of what awaited him forecast its shadow upon his path as he proceeded

slowly up the graveled walk, looking about him in wondering inquiry. The porch and hall were crowded with people, many of whom were strangers. A man's voice within was lifted in exhortation. Some one stepped to his side and led him gently into the parlor. Beneath the arch that ran across the room stood a bier, draped with black cloth, and covered with flowers.

Painfully, like one who learns the meaning of a strange language word by word, ignorant of its connection with what is past and unseeing what is to come, he crossed the room and stood behind the coffin. Still and unresponsive, the light of a heavenly peace on her worn features and pale brow, he saw his mother, cold and dead.

The funeral was over, and father and son entered together their desolate home.

"Father, for her sake!" Philip King could say no more, but he stretched out his hand in humble appeal. The eyes of the elder man were blinded by sorrow. He failed to see, or seeing, failed to read the meaning of the deeply-graven lines on the young man's face. He only remembered that the boy had been the one to bring disgrace on an honored name, to drag down his own commercial credit, and to cloud his mother's life with sorrow. This mention of the dead stirred his smothering resentment to a low flame.

"'For her sake!' I have no intention of turning melodramatic, Philip, of disowning you as my son, or of visiting upon you a father's curse. Crime

itself entails a heavier curse than human lips can pronounce. But don't appeal to her memory. You broke her heart ten years ago. She never held up her head after that day. Had it not been for you she might have been alive and happy here to-day."

The justice of these accusations sank deep into the soul of the younger man; but ten years of rough schooling among a hardened crowd had done their work, and he gave no outward sign of the misery that racked his being, nor could his tongue, long used to silence, express the bitter penitence he felt.

The father, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bowed low upon his breast, paced up and down the room. The son stood motionless, his eyes fixed upon a faded portrait of his mother in her youthful days, which hung on the opposite wall. Following with painful intentness the resemblance between the fair young countenance and the aged face he had seen lying in the coffin, he scarcely observed that the elder man had again approached him and prepared to resume the conversation.

"I am going away, Philip," he said. "Affairs have not prospered with me this last ten years. The house is mortgaged for more than half its value. Next week it passes from my hands, and with the little I shall have left I have decided to go up the coast to Seattle and try to get a foothold there. It will be better for Fred. The boy has had a hard struggle here; it is not the best recommendation in the world for a young man to be known as a felon's brother."

He waited as if he expected some word of self-defense or extenuation from the silent man before him, but none was forthcoming.

"Your room up-stairs has always remained as you left it," he continued. "She wished it so. I would rather you took the things away before the rest of the house is disturbed. In a drawer of the dressing-case you will find a small sum she put by for your use."

As if the effort of speaking so long had been more than his feeble strength could sustain, the gray-haired man sank wearily into an arm-chair, and pressed his thin hands over the old eyes, that were weak with weeping, weary of life with its attendant train of misery and shame.

The returned convict looked at him a moment in irresolution, then turned and left him. With heavy heart and lagging step he traversed rooms whose every association was fraught with memories of forfeited happiness, and passed up the broad, old-fashioned staircase. He stood before the door of the little hall chamber he had called his own, as one lingers and procrastinates before the chamber of death. The sound of a door, his brother's, shutting sharply on the opposite side of the hall, stimulated him to enter, and he went in, closing the door softly behind him.

He stood in the presence of mute witnesses of blighted hopes and ruined aspirations. Around him were countless mementos of his lost boyhood and wrecked manhood. He sat down in a cushioned chair beside the window, whose gay patchwork

covering was the work of hands forever still. On every side were tokens of her tender love. The slipper-case at the head of the bed, the embroidered slippers inside, the dressing-gown on the hook above, the pretty mats on wash-stand and dressing-case, a rug at his feet, — all were evidences of his mother's faithful care.

Resting his elbows upon his knees, he buried his face in his hands. Even in that hour of bitter retrospection, the stern discipline of his prison life was strong upon him, and he neither groaned nor wept.

How long he remained there he could not have told. He rose at length, and moved slowly about the room, taking down little ornaments from the wall, opening drawers, and putting some articles inside. He opened the door of a clothes-press, and took the key from the lock of a small trunk; then lifted out a larger one and placed some articles of clothing inside, locked it, and pocketed the key. Evidences of his mother's forethought greeted him on every hand. The abundant store of fresh linen was redolent with the fragrance of sweet clover. Some needful additions had been made to his wardrobe, and all was in scrupulous order. In the drawer of a small desk at the side of the room he found the letters he had written to her, carefully preserved and tied with ribbon, along with a faded photograph taken in his boyhood. Long afterward he learned that it had been one of her last acts feebly to climb the stairs and closet herself in his room.

As he passed the dressing-case he picked up a small fan-shaped tablet with an ivory-headed pencil pendent from silken tassels. It was the dancing programme he had carried that last fatal night before his flight. A smile that was not good to see flickered about his lips as he observed the frequent repetition of the name "Margaret Thaxter," written in a round, girlish hand. Then he recalled his father's words, and, opening a small drawer, was surprised to see a roll of coin. Who, then, had sent that other sum that had been handed to him by the warden in the morning? Standing there, engaged in deep speculation, he chanced to look up, and saw his own reflection in the glass before him. The package dropped from his hands, the glittering coins struck the marble with a dull ring, and freeing themselves from their envelope, chased each other over the carpet.

Mirrors were considered superfluous commodities at San Quentin. He looked upon his own image for the first time in ten years.

Dumb with anguish, blinded with sorrow, he moved down the stairs, and was passing through the outer door when a low voice spoke his name, and he turned to find his father gravely regarding him, the sternness vanished from his features, and replaced by a look of wistful pain.

"Don't think unkindly of my action, Phil. I am an old man, and my shoulders are none too strong to carry my own burdens. There was a time when I looked forward to leaning on my eldest son in my old age."

His voice shook, and he stopped abruptly. Father and son sadly viewed each other across the barrier of years, recalling for the moment the old tender relation of love and confidence.

"That is the hardest of all, father."

"There, there, boy!"

He extended his hand and took his son's for a moment, in a warm grasp, but whatever the sentiment that agitated his heart, it remained unspoken.

Philip King walked slowly down the street, pondering his situation. The sum of money in his pocket was sufficient to carry him to some distant point where he could start out in the world anew, and where no knowledge of his past life would follow to overcast his future. But his mind was firmly made up on one point. He had shown the white feather once, and for the last time. He would take up life where he had dropped it, and fight out the battle of existence on the same ground where he had once striven and lost. He realized that the odds against him were well nigh overwhelming, but they were of his own making. Persistent effort might yet undo past error.

His first step was to secure a quiet room in a cheap quarter. He found the place he wanted, on a narrow street within a stone's-throw of his old home. The house stood on the slope of a hill, and had valiantly resisted the attempts of municipal committees to reduce it to the level of the street, until it stood in solitary supremacy above its neighbors, and was accessible only by long flights of steps cut in the solid rock. The landlady was a feeble

gentlewoman, whose failing fortunes had made it necessary to let apartments to eke out her declining income. And because the house was old-fashioned in its architecture, and reveled in sunshine and fresh air rather than stateliness and gloom, and because it stood on the side of a picturesque hill which wind and fog instinctively avoided, instead of towering from the bleak summit of the western heights whither wealth and fashion had long since fled, the schedule of prices was on a commensurate scale. King found himself in possession of a cheery and comfortable room on the second floor, for which, unfurnished, he paid the modest sum of six dollars a month.

When he had transported thither his simple belongings, he lost no time in lamenting his unhappy fate or bemoaning his grief, but resolutely faced the situation. One steady purpose had entered his mind during the earlier days of his confinement, and had grown and strengthened with the years. It had survived the cruel test of scorn, the rankling scrutiny of unbelief. Even the dense coils of injustice had been impotent to stifle it. To accomplish his end he must have steady and paying occupation.

If he thought with unavailing regret of the easy and lucrative post that had seemed to him so slight a thing in his mad folly ten years before, it never occurred to him to seek employment in his former field. He looked only to his trade for support. No other course seemed possible to him but to start out in a new line, where industrious habits and

manual skill would be their own best recommendations; where no man would be required to honor him with his confidence, or risk aught by taking him into his employ.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER SUSPICION.

THE first place he visited was a large factory on the south side of Market Street, a house which had taken several important state contracts, and maintained a small army of workmen. The business was conducted by a stock company, which had its regularly chosen officers and directors, including among them some of the wealthiest and most prominent men in the city.

Unused to the formalities of such establishments, King asked to see the head of the house, and a courteous salesman directed him to a row of neatly fitted offices partitioned off from the main exhibition room.

He found the president of the company busily writing at a desk. The accumulation of a large and handsome property had not served to disturb the systematic business methods of Jasper Blakeman. Holding himself a little aloof in social intercourse, in his commercial relations he prided himself upon being a man of working habits — a man of the people. At this particular epoch his activity had received fresh stimulus from the circumstance that a United States senatorship would soon be vacated, and his friends were advocating his nomina-

tion, on the score of these very praiseworthy and popular attributes.

He did not do the new-comer the grace of lifting his pen from the paper, but, after one careless glance, saluted him with an indifferent greeting.

"Well, what 's wanted?"

"Work."

"What trade?"

"Carpenter — cabinet-maker."

"What name?"

"Philip King."

"Ed, call Jobson."

The general superintendent made his appearance — a short, compactly built man, whose brisk air proclaimed him to be an exponent of his employer's principles.

"Any men needed on wood-work, Jobson?"

"We could make use of half a dozen more hands, Mr. Blakeman. That lot of chairs for the Sacramento theatre is promised the first of the month, and we are pretty close run."

"Where have you been working?"

This query was addressed to King, who met it without hesitation or surprise. It was what he had expected.

"At San Quentin."

"Penitentiary?"

"Yes."

Humiliating as it was to make this public confession, the applicant was not blind to the fact that his announcement had produced a singular and unaccountable effect upon the head of the establish-

ment. Jasper Blakeman was a tall man, broad and portly of figure, and carried himself with the dignity and pomposity befitting a man of his importance; but as he shifted his attitude with a nervous movement, he seemed to shrink and collapse, as if some inner spring of pride or self-respect had been roughly jarred, and his eyes dilated with a hunted look.

Was it mere physical fear, the insensate horror and repulsion that sometimes seizes men on contact with an avowed criminal? King asked himself the question in wondering speculation.

The president's next act was in distinct rebuttal of this theory. He spoke to the two other men.

"That 'll do, Jobson. Ed, take this bill around to Failing & Winchester's."

Left alone with his visitor, he addressed him with an anxious and deprecating air, which presented a curious contrast to his usual self-sufficient bearing.

"Mr. King, why did you come to me?" He dwelt upon the last word in such a way as to impart a peculiar personal significance to the question. King received it with unfeigned suprise.

"Because I wanted employment; because I knew you had the largest furniture establishment on the coast; because I knew you had three hundred men in your employ; because" —

"That is enough." The equanimity of the questioner was restored by this candid statement of fact, and a flavor of his customary arrogance returned. "Nevertheless," he added, "I can't employ you.

It would be entirely opposed to our policy, sir; entirely opposed to our policy. However, I appreciate the hardship of your position, and I don't mind doing so much."

He pulled open a drawer as he spoke, and taking out a twenty-dollar gold piece, placed it deliberately on the end of the desk nearest to where his visitor stood. King contemplated the money for a moment as if he were unable to grasp the meaning of the act, and was trying to decipher it on the face of the coin; then his eye traveled with keen curiosity to the face of the donor.

"If you can't give me work," he said, bluntly, "I don't see why you should expect me to take your money."

He suddenly ceased speaking, for beneath the gladness of worldly prosperity, the complacency of unsullied position, and the consciousness of popular esteem that rejoiced in every line of the manufacturer's broad countenance, he detected a mystic and indelible imprint. In the anxious face, the averted eye, the uncertain gesture, he read the acknowledgment of a hidden bond of affinity; the comfortless, the shameful, the tragical fellowship of crime.

King went the rounds of the other factories in a methodical and mechanical fashion. Easy as the undertaking seemed, it was not a task that could be accomplished in a day, nor yet in a week, for there were tiresome spells of waiting before his application could be heard, and in many cases he called again and again, only to find the employer absent

or engaged. By many he was met with courtesy, and he received sympathy from a few, but as a rule he found every place already filled, and in the few instances where a vacancy afforded room for a faithful and capable man, his questionable credentials lost him the day. He finally took his way to a cabinet-maker on Fourth Street, an old friend of his father's, with whom they had dealt in the time of their prosperity. The convict shrank from recalling himself to this man, but some remembrance of his kindly face caused him to think that his application would not be in vain. He found that the small establishment had given way to a mammoth building with large show-rooms, presenting a glass front to the street; and the blockade of teams outside, the hurried movements of men within, gave evidence of sound financial prosperity.

"Good day, sir."

The owner turned and greeted him with a brisk business air.

"Don't you remember me, Mr. McAllister? My name is King, Philip King."

"Bless my soul!" The manufacturer shook hands with him in an awkward way, without enthusiasm or warmth.

"I called," said the returned felon, "to ask for work; joiner, turner, finisher, — anything in the line of ordinary cabinet work. I ought to understand my trade. I have served a long apprenticeship." And he gave a short, bitter laugh.

McAllister listened with a troubled look.

"Come with me, Mr. King," he said, as the young

man concluded. He led the applicant through the ware-rooms and a large store-room in the rear, fragrant with the smell of spicy woods; then up a flight of stairs to where an open doorway commanded a view of a long apartment, in which stalwart workmen flitted back and forth, busy as bees in a hive.

"Look there, King."

The two men viewed in silence the scene of honest activity, noting the cheerful faces of the workers, their quick, firm tread, their strong, skillful hands; and a pleasurable sensation stirred in both their breasts.

"I have over a hundred hands in there," said the head of the establishment, slowly, "and I believe every one of them is an honest man; they have all been tried and proved. Many of them have wives and children. They are a sober, hard-working, steady set, trained to the bench from their youth. If one of them drops out to-day there will be a score of his kind ready to take his place to-morrow. I put it to your sense of justice, King: do you think I would be justified in shipping one of them and taking — you — in his place?"

King shook his head in silent negation. They descended the stairs and walked slowly toward the outer door. The puzzled expression worn by the manufacturer from the commencement of the interview deepened. At the door he turned to the younger man, with a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders, —

"I can't say I exactly understand, King, how you

should be in precisely this position. It was a pile of money to sink inside of six weeks."

"You remember I accounted for every cent. It all went up in Bullion, one of the worst wildcat stocks ever floated on the market."

"I know; I know. But there was fifteen thousand besides. There, there; don't get excited, man. If you don't choose to give a friend your confidence, nobody 's going to force it."

The subject of the missing money, which had wholly passed from King's mind, had been sprung upon him so unexpectedly that in his surprise and consternation he was only capable of a confused protest. He found himself in the street before he could frame an intelligent denial, and then his mind was so occupied with the substance of what he had heard that he did not trouble himself with useless regrets over the omission. So the missing funds had never been accounted for, and people still hugged the delusion that he had appropriated tho greater as well as the lesser sum, — he, who had not another resource in the world aside from the little sum provided by his mother's tender forethought, and who already reckoned forward by days to the time when that would be exhausted. The tragedy of the position impressed him far more than its absurdity.

Abandoning all hope of procuring work at the large factories, he undertook a thorough canvass of the smaller establishments, beginning with the different planing mills where the manufacture of furniture was carried on in a small way, and ending

with the small repairing-shops scattered throughout the city. In the latter places he encountered an unforeseen difficulty. It frequently happened, under an extra pressure of work, that a hand was needed, but each man was expected to provide his own kit of tools, a purchase involving the outlay of a considerable sum, and the applicant had neither money nor credit. After a while he became accustomed to disappointment. He rose in the morning prepared for misfortune, and fought the day's losing fight with a serene and expectant face. Now and then he gave himself over to long fits of meditation, curiously speculating as to how it all would end. So long as his health and strength held out his duty was clear; but there was a limit to all things, and time was swiftly advancing with its stern restrictions.

He walked along Front Street early one forenoon, his hand thrust into his pocket, with a tight grasp upon the single coin it held. This piece of silver was literally his last dollar, and he clung to it with a tenacity little short of superstition. He had gone without his breakfast that morning sooner than break the coin, and as he loitered in front of the great wholesale market he pondered the stories he had heard of men who made their fortunes through shrewd investments of trifling sums, speculating upon his own qualifications for an itinerant fruit-vender or street merchant. Whimsically indulging his day-dream, he plunged into a series of abstract computations, in which the silver dollar compounded daily at a fabulous interest, speedily attaining the proportions of a colossal sum.

His visionary calculations were interrupted by the appearance of an old woman, who came out of a dingy alley, walking feebly, and crossed the sidewalk before him. Her hands were swollen and distorted by the ravages of some painful disease, and her garb of rusty black hung in tatters about her. In her hand she carried a long stick, and as she reached the curbstone, first looking around as if to assure herself that her action was not observed, she extended the staff and eagerly poked over the mass of refuse dumped from the vegetable carts. Her object was revealed when her search was rewarded by a sound white turnip, accidentally dropped in the hasty transfer of the produce from carts to the market. Gathering up the skirt of her dress, to form a receptacle for her gleanings, she hurriedly stooped and secured her prize. A small crimson beet, a couple of new potatoes, a fragment of cauliflower, and some cabbage-leaves repaid her further search, and sighing heavily, she turned to go.

King craved no further evidence of the old creature's want. Her bowed and decrepit form, her wrinkled face, her gray hairs, her shrinking manner, and the pathetic episode of which he had been an unseen witness were sufficient vouchers of her need. Stepping rapidly and with caution, he neared her side, and stealthily extending his hand, dropped the coin into her skirt and started to move on. A gruff voice arrested him.

He turned and saw a policeman, who bore down upon him with an air of wrathful authority. The

old woman halted, alarmed and trembling, looking from one man to the other, in fear and consternation.

"Before the Lord," she asserted, "I 've done nothing out of the way."

"No more do I believe you have, Susan," the officer assured her, in a friendly tone. "You 've lived on Brenham Place a matter of fifteen years or more, and there 's not one can say you 've ever laid hands on other people's property, or been anything but an unfortunate, harmless old soul. But this here man 's a different case. He 's a bad one. Six months out of prison, and never once turning his hand to honest work. He 's Under Suspicion, he is." And the blue-coat riveted upon King a lofty and dramatic glare, which the latter made no feint of resenting.

"The question is," continued the officer, slowly and impressively, "what was the fellow sneaking after you for, and catching hold of your dress? What have you got in your skirt, Susan? Don't be afraid to let me see," he said, kindly.

Thus exhorted, the old woman dropped her skirt, and her motley collection tumbled pell-mell upon the sidewalk, but a shining silver coin was swifter, and struck with a musical clink, curveting around the inequalities of the pavement, and finally coming to rest in a little hollow.

"Oh, I beg you 'll believe me, sir, when I say I never saw it until this moment! I never knew it was there. It must have been caught in the cabbage leaves, as I scrambled them up, or else" —

She looked at King with a sudden light in her faded eyes. The policeman's gaze was also concentrated upon the young man's face, scanning it with a look of sharp inquiry. The suspicion vanished from the officer's face.

"Well, you are a soft one, and no mistake." He uttered the words slowly, and with an oracular air, regarding King with the look of a man accustomed to rank all mankind according to their susceptibility.

"Don't you know you 're playing the fool, young man, encouraging street beggary and the like?" he demanded, testily.

"There was an old man died of starvation up on Bartlett Alley the other night. At the end of your beat, is it not? Suppose some one had happened along in time to play the fool with him?"

"Go on with your blasted nonsense, then, if you have the tin to back it," returned the policeman, "only I warn you the whole force is on the lookout for that hidden treasure of yours. We 're sure to come across it some day, and then all your fine notions will be played out;" and he laughed, a rough guffaw which was a rare mixture of goodnature and irony.

The street was so quiet and deserted at that time of day that King fancied the little episode had escaped observation, but a man who trod the pavement behind him had been a spectator of the curious by-play, and quickened his pace to overtake the surreptitious almsgiver. A big hand fell on King's shoulder, as it had fallen on a memorable

occasion more than ten years gone by, and he turned with a look almost as shamefaced as on that previous meeting, to encounter a pair of honest blue eyes beaming with friendly feeling.

"King, how are you?"

Voice and words and manner unchanged. John Rutherford's tone was as hearty, his greeting as cordial and unembarrassed, as if the man before him had just returned from a long and perilous journey. For the first time since his release, the freed convict met an honest man on the plane of an equal. For the first time he felt himself a recognized element of the world from which he had lived so long apart.

"I see you have received a high honor since I saw you last. The office could not have fallen on more worthy shoulders," said King, recalling a legislative act which had created the office of State Mineralogist, and elevated John Rutherford to the place.

"Thank you. It gives me a chance to ventilate some of my hobbies," and the man of science gave a genial smile.

"Hobbies! Everybody knows what noble projects for the good of the people you delight in masking under that title," and King's earnest eyes rounded the compliment his lips had essayed to utter. They progressed along the street, chatting on topics of mutual interest. So pleasantly did John Rutherford conduct the conversation, so delicately did he avoid all reference to the past, that King for once lost sight of the humiliations of his

situation, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world when the mineralogist followed a discussion of some of his own plans with a direct personal inquiry.

"By the way, King, what are you doing now?"

"Endeavoring to live on faith and my own wits; trying to determine what possibilities of distinction and profit are open to a man destitute of reputation, capital, and friends."

"Have a care what you say. What was that last clause?"

"Well, let me amend it, my dear fellow, and say one staunch friend, who could not help me if he would, and ought not if he could."

"King, why have n't you been around to see me?"

"Because I liked you too well, Rutherford."

"Drop nonsense, and talk plain English."

"Because you are in a position where every act as an individual is open to public scrutiny. Because I did not wish to compromise you."

"Compromise me!"

It was quite remarkable how a man like Rutherford, given to gentle speech and courteous phrase, could concentrate so much contempt and scorn into two words.

"Yes, compromise you. Intercourse with a convicted felon would besmirch your own character, and compromise you in the eyes of your constituents."

"Look here, King! You don't mean it, but you are making me dwindle in my own self-respect as

the most caustic utterances of my enemies have never done. Compromise me! Good heavens! is my character then based upon so slight a fabric of public confidence that it could not endure a test like that? I would throw up my position to-day if I believed it."

His stormy outburst concluded with a hearty laugh.

"I had a scheme in my mind when I watched that little performance of yours over by the market, Philip," he proceeded, "but, by George, you make me almost afraid to suggest it. I need an assistant in my laboratory. Fifteen years ago, when I gave lectures on chemistry at the University, I recollect you had quite a leaning that way yourself. Don't you think you could brush up your knowledge and take hold with me for a time?"

"Rutherford, are you sure you're not making the place for me?"

"Morally certain," replied the mineralogist. "I had a German chemist for a while, but he left me a week ago for a place with a patent medicine company, which offered him a handsomer retainer than the State could afford. I would n't like to make any reflection on our California Legislature, but it is an uncommonly curious arrangement that they should make one of their departments dependent on the very institution it is designed to destroy. The whole end and aim of my office is to suppress stock-gambling, and direct capital to the support of legitimate mining. Yet by a brilliant proviso of the bill creating it, our chief revenue is derived

from a ten-cent tax on each transfer of mining stock made in the market. Every stroke of work we have done since we were established has been a direct blow at our own income. Starting out with a round sum, it has been steadily diminishing, until I have been obliged to become my own clerk, secretary, and janitor. So you see I have no very flattering prospect to offer you."

Oppressed by many misgivings, King assumed the post so kindly tendered him, resolved to perform his duties with such diligence and fidelity that his friend would have no cause to regret the offer. His chief duties consisted in making examinations of specimens from mineral discoveries in different portions of the State, as the basis of official reports — a service freely tendered by the State to the humblest of her citizens. Laboring in careful compliance with Rutherford's directions, he executed his work with such accuracy and dispatch that correspondents were spared the vexatious delays which had hitherto ensued when they desired a prompt analysis of an unknown mineral, or speedy analysis of a specimen of ore. Rutherford did not hesitate to express his satisfaction in unequivocal terms.

"I don't see how I ever got along without you, King. You are simply invaluable to me."

"You are reckoning only the material service. Wait until you hear from other quarters. We shall soon be under fire."

King's predictions were soon verified, and the mineralogist was brought face to face with the

problem whose very suggestion he had so indignantly repudiated on their first encounter. Upon the presentation of the vouchers for King's first quarter's salary, the horde of hungry office-seekers, who keep a zealous watch over all matters savoring of political patronage, promptly resurrected the history of his past career, and industriously circulated the tale that the mineralogist, ignoring the claims of honest men who were in need of work, had taken a discharged convict into the employ of the State. Men of influence and wealth took up the hue and cry. The newspapers reëchoed it, and demanded the discharge of the offensive assistant. Some even went so far as to insinuate that King had made his way into the office in pursuance of a preconcerted plan to rob the State Museum of valuable specimens of gold and silver ore which it contained. Rutherford's friends appealed to him to respect public sentiment and discharge the objectionable employee, but he stood firm.

"King has erred, it is true," he argued; "but how many men in the community are exempt from blame? The man is making a gallant struggle, and I have n't one in my employ who is doing such good service to the State."

At the first intimation King received of the opposition his appointment was arousing, he proposed to abdicate his place, but was reassured by Rutherford's careless rejoinder: —

"Pay no attention to the matter. It is the work of a few political shysters, and will soon blow over."

King, leading a secluded life, seeing few people, and in the absorption of his professional duties rarely taking time to read a newspaper, was one of the last to learn the true extent of the commotion. Stepping into his chief's room one day during the latter's absence, his eye fell upon a newspaper open at the editorial columns, and seeing Rutherford's name and his own in close proximity, he sat down and deliberately read the context. He was appalled at the substance of the article. Taking for its text the employment of a discharged convict in the State Mining Bureau, which was characterized as a rank act of injustice and a grievous insult to honest men, it proceeded to a most malignant attack upon Rutherford's personal character, and a venomous denunciation of the conduct of the office.

King sat down at his friend's desk and wrote rapidly and hurriedly, looking up at the outer door from time to time, as if in apprehension lest the occupant of the room should arrive before he had finished.

When John Rutherford returned a half hour later, he found the street door locked, and searched in vain for his assistant. He seated himself at his desk, and the first thing he saw was a marked passage in a newspaper, and beside it a folded paper containing King's resignation.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

If King had hitherto been inclined to avoid men of his own class and escape the recognition of old acquaintances, he had now a definite and rational motive. He was in constant apprehension lest some clew to his movements should reach John Rutherford, or he should encounter the mineralogist upon the streets, for he doubted his own ability to withstand the eloquent persuasion of his friend, the contagion of his courage, the challenge of his brave blue eye. That Rutherford should jeopardize his own position further through befriending him was a disaster to be prevented at any cost. He therefore resolved to keep out of sight until he could present himself with good news. When he got into something paying and permanent, it would become a natural and agreeable duty to confide his good fortune to his friend, and load down the latter with tender reproaches for the unwarrantable risks he had incurred in his behalf.

He no longer canvassed the offices of wholesale establishments, seeking a subordinate clerical position, or visited mills and factories, in a vain hope of finding work at his trade. His industrial beat was now confined to the lower portions of the city,

where coal and grain were bartered and sold, the various materials used in building were stored, and the bulk of the vast trade of a lively commercial port was transacted. Sometimes he wandered along the wharves, where great ships, hailing from every land beneath the sun, discharged their varied cargoes, and in time he came to envy the very stevedores, whose muscular prowess insured them ready occupation at fair wages, untroubled by considerations of their moral status or previous career.

Occasionally he was so fortunate as to find occupation for a day or two at some light labor, but neither physical superiority, nor a pronounced adaptation to the work on which he was engaged, operated to secure him a permanent place.

Had he ever felt disposed to regard the memory of his prison life, with its nauseating train of recollections, as some hateful dream, the experiences of his daily life rendered it impossible that he should forget. Everywhere he went he encountered familiar forms and faces, shadowy figures that skulked through the streets in conscious guilt and degradation, gathered in stealthy confab where blind alleys opened upon the public thoroughfares, or roamed the streets more boldly when the sun had withdrawn its light, and the feeble rays of San Francisco gaslight rendered the shadows more opaque. The air of confidential fellowship with which these disreputable apparitions habitually greeted King, the knowing leer which seemed to invite his confidence and suggest a secret community of purpose, the easy and matter-of-fact manner in which they

were accustomed to strike him for a quarter, increased his sense of humiliation, and tended to discourage any secret ambition he may have cherished to regain the respect of the better element of society. Even the columns of the daily papers constantly renewed the dismal recollections of the past, and scarcely a day elapsed without the annals of the police court, with their record of misery and crime, reviving memories of old acquaintanceship, and adding another black page to the history of men whose lives had been inextricably interwoven with his own in daily association behind prison walls.

The time had been when he had reasoned with himself that his transgression was an offense against society, and that by serving out the sentence imposed by the law, which is supposed to be society's constituted voice, he would have expiated his sin. Slowly he acquired the painful lesson that his gravest crime had been the sin against himself, and that the most stringent legal penalty, patiently undergone, could not undo the result, nor efface the brand upon his soul.

The episode with Jasper Blakeman was only the beginning of a series of puzzling and annoying experiences. In the course of his long and profitless search after occupation, he came constantly in contact with men whose faces he had never seen before, whose very personalities were unknown to him, but who still addressed him in varying tones of severity, caution, apprehension, or kindness, while between their souls and his own a strange light of recognition flashed.

In later years he arrived at a clearer understanding of these vague intimations, and the undefined suspicion of wrong assumed shape and form. When he had reached this stage of philosophy he did not look far or search deeply for underlying principles. As a man who himself passes through the sharp agony and slow misery of a wasting disease becomes an infallible witness of its development and progress in others, so the man who has experienced the deadly ravages of concealed guilt working upon a human existence recognizes by unerring intuition the symptoms of moral disorder and decay. As a physician acquires in hospital practice a nice discrimination between symptoms, and a skillful classification of disease, the man who receives his schooling in a state prison, and views with a studious mind the traits and idiosyncrasies of the moral invalids by whom he is surrounded, gains a peculiar insight into the spiritual condition of fallen men; and these perceptions are only sharpened if for a time he shares their estate.

Let men preach, if they will, the strong ties of human love, the sacred links of friendship, the holy sanctity of the marriage tie. I will show you a bond more powerful than all these, more enduring than human affection, more indissoluble than priestly rite, more tenacious than friendship: and it is the humiliating fellowship of crime. There is only one tie on earth that is stronger, and that is the bond of suffering and loss.

The time came when King no longer demurred at the verdict society and the business world had

combined to render against his claims to renewed trust.

Returning from a fruitless pilgrimage one day in early summer, as he turned up Folsom Street he observed that a man was following him. Walking slowly, to give the fellow opportunity to decrease the distance between them, he wheeled suddenly about and encountered a well-known figure. An incredulous exclamation escaped him.

"Stubbs!"

"Hist, Master Phil; don't be after spakin' the name so loud. Jist walk along as if nothin' was up, an' let me kape pace with you on the edge of the curb — so."

The two men proceeded in silence for a while. King was the first to speak.

"How does the stock-raising come on, Stubbs? Do you think you are exactly wise to come back here among your old associates?"

Instead of hanging his head or beginning a lame apology, the criminal looked King square in the eye, with an expression that was new to him, and was at the same time honest and deprecating.

"An' you 'll not be makin' game of me, Master Phil, when I 'm tellin' you?"

"I think I can promise to keep sober, Stubbs. To my mind it 's no laughing matter."

"The truth to tell, I have n't been out of town at all. Walk on a little ahead, an' don't seem to be takin' any notice of me. There 's a cop a-standin' on the corner by the side of the fire hydrant, an' lookin' moighty sharp this way."

This penal Rubicon passed, Stubbs accelerated his steps and resumed his confidences.

"I don't so much mind tellin' you, Master Phil, but I would n't like the rest of the boys to git hould of it. I 've an old mother livin' over there on Tehama Street," inclining his head in the direction of a little lane, where squalid homes were elbowed by grogshops, and half-clad children wallowed in the dirt. "I wint up that way the day we came back, d' ye remember? and found the old lady bent up double with the rheumatics, not a blissid cint in the house, an' they threatenin' to turn her out for two months' rint due. What could I do but empty my pockets to the last dollar?"

He looked at King as if expecting to hear some word of rebuke for his prodigality or weakness, but received a reassuring reply.

"Good, Stubbs. I thought it was in you."

Stubbs brushed his sleeve impatiently across his eyes. Words of commendation were not so common an occurrence in his life that he could listen to them unmoved.

"There was no gittin' off after that till I made a raise."

He stopped short, and King gave him kindly encouragement.

"Hard to find work, is n't it, old fellow?"

"Hard!" Stubbs's voice had a ring of angry contempt. "Hard! I call it allfired mane for thim idintical snobs that is always prachin' honest work to a man, to turn about and tell him to rot or starve, whin he begs them to give him a show.

Such treatment is a bid for diviltry, an' a fellow is a fool who 'd stand it."

This very natural if not exactly creditable sentiment passed unchallenged by his companion.

"I 'd better be turnin' off here, Master Phil. I would n't like to have it known that I was with you this night. I 'm off to Mexico in the mornin', and whin I rayalize on some goods down there I 'll pay you back the money you was so good as to loan me. Or if a bit of change would come in convanient just now "— He thrust his hand into his pocket, and his friend heard the jingle of loose coin.

"Tell me one thing first, Stubbs," he earnestly insisted. "Did you come by this money honestly?"

King's query was answered in an unexpected manner. Stubbs's arms were pinioned from behind, and a pair of handcuffs clicked together around his wrists.

"Call round at the police court to-morrow morning, and you 'll find out where the scallawag got it," said a gruff voice to King. "Lucky for you, my man, you put that question just this moment, or we 'd have taken you along, sure as sin."

The next day the town rang with the account of a daring robbery perpetrated in the storage basement of a large dry goods store — an event which had occurred some days previously, but which had been hushed up to enable the detectives to apprehend the thieves, one of whom was captured on the eve of leaving for the southern coast with his ill-gotten gains. A few weeks later Stubbs was *en*

route for San Quentin for the sixth time in his experience, sentenced for life, as a hardened and incorrigible criminal.

This episode only served to emphasize the conviction already established in King's mind, that the man who has once stooped to crime is tenfold more liable to yield to temptation than one who has preserved his moral integrity intact. He questioned whether he himself would impose trust in a man who had once proved unworthy, notwithstanding the insight his own miserable experience had given him, into the discouragement and needs that beset a fallen man in his endeavors to extricate himself from the quagmire into which he has deliberately walked. A sense of moral despondency overcast him like an impenetrable cloud. He grew so accustomed to failure that he no longer prosecuted his search for employment with a remote hope of success, but made his requests in a dejected tone, which anticipated and invited denial. In more than one instance he secured a refusal where a bolder demand might have inspired confidence in his ability. Meanwhile, the little store of money that he had put by from his salary while in the State Museum was steadily decreasing, and his needs grew desperate. One morning he saw an advertisement calling for several hundred men to work on the sea-wall in process of construction at North Beach. He presented himself promptly at the designated hour, and found himself one of an ignorant crowd, chiefly of foreign extraction. The foreman gave him a sharp glance as he enrolled his name upon the

books, and King was conscious of an answering sense of ignoble confusion. In all his life he had never disdained honest work, or regarded the exercise of muscle unworthy of the best of men. To be without any alternative but recourse to manual labor was an altogether different matter. He knew that he was engaging work for which he was physically unfitted, and for which his previous training had rendered him ill adapted. It was another nail in the coffin of his once promising career, and there was added degradation in the thought.

Such employment offered absolutely no future, no opportunity of distinction. Working side by side with him were men of stalwart frame and iron muscle, who could easily discount his utmost physical effort. To eat, to drink, and to sleep; to provide a homely shelter and coarse living for their families, if they possessed any; to go on a rousing spree every Saturday night, whether or no they were troubled with any such minor dependencies, was the sum of their ambition. Their treatment of a man whose dress and manner proclaimed him their superior was well nigh intolerable; but King nerved himself to let their jeers and taunts pass unheeded, in the hope of laying by a small sum which might enable him to embark in some independent business on a small scale. He had reached that point in his experience when the possession of a little vegetable stand in an humble quarter of the city, or the establishment of a repairing shop for furniture, over which he could maintain undisputed dominion, appeared to him like a small dukedom.

He was punctually on hand every day, laboring no longer and no less than his fellow-laborers, and though he attempted no remarkable spurts of work, he noticed with grim satisfaction that his muscle steadily increased, and that in aspect and habit he was gradually becoming attuned to the common level of the workmen. One day he received unexpected encouragement. A man was needed to do a fine job of finishing on the interior of one of the long warehouses, and King applied for the berth.

His application was received with surprise and incredulity. They looked at his laborer's garb, by this time soiled and worn, and contrasted it with the refinement of his face and his well-bred manner.

"Show us what you can do," said a master workman, and he placed some tools at the new-comer's hand.

A half-hour's trial served as a conclusive test of his ability, and his name was struck off the pay-roll of the laborers, to be assigned to a new place, with more than double his former pay.

He pocketed his first week's wages with a feeling of renewed energy and ambition, confident that he had at last secured a foothold, and that he could reckon upon an advance in the future. On the way to his lodgings he indulged in the unwonted luxury of a pair of new shoes, and gratified his landlady by presenting her with a couple of months' room rent in advance, reserving only sufficient money to carry himself through the coming week. On the following Monday morning he made an

early start, tramping across the hills with a free step and renewed courage. For the first time, he realized that the severe labor of past weeks had acted as a spiritual tonic, for the mind has neither time nor inclination to brood when every sinew of the body is strained to its utmost tension in hard physical exertion.

So deeply was he absorbed in his work that he did not notice the superintendent, as he approached on his regular morning round. That dignitary critically examined a section of redwood counter upon which King was working, and gave it the seal of his approval.

"An excellent job, my man. I don't know when I ve seen a neater piece of joining."

King looked his gratification at this remark, but did not cease his work.

"A fine job, an excellent job," repeated the superintendent, slowly. "Where did you learn your trade?"

The tool King was using fell from his hand and clattered noisily upon the floor. He stooped to pick it up before he replied. The temptation was strong upon him to give a false or evasive answer.

"Where did you learn your trade?" The superintendent was a tenacious man, and the brief delay only served to whet his impatience.

"I learned my trade at San Quentin."

His questioner gave vent to an impatient ejaculation. "And how long since you came down from there?"

"About two years ago."

"Discharged or pardoned?"

"I served out my time."

King made no further pretense at work, nor did his questioner appear to expect it. He summoned the foreman of the carpenters with an imperious beck of the hand. The latter approached with an anxious and apprehensive air.

"See here, Dick, do you know this fellow's antecedents?"

"I only know he was at work on the wall when we took him. He came in here the day McDonough took sick."

"It is your business to know. What do you say to putting a convict at work here, among all this fine stuff, where he can help himself to any amount of valuables lying around loose, or cut our throats, as like as not, if he gets a chance?"

"I don't care a button what charge you went up on," he hastily added, as he saw that King was about to speak. "Murder or forgery or arson or horse-stealing — it 's all one to me. You 're a bad lot together. I would n't trust one of you with a jew's-harp. You may consider yourself discharged."

King returned to his lodging-house, and sitting down in his lonely room, gave up the struggle.

He had lost faith in himself.

CHAPTER IX.

DESPAIR.

THERE came a morning when he awoke with a heavy weight on his brain. A voice to which he had hitherto refused to listen rung the same cry with ceaseless repetition in his ear. His wearying struggles and hopeless failures, the insults he had received, the incredulity with which his protestations of reform had been met, trooped before him, a maddening procession. Impelled by a vague unrest, he took his way on an aimless tramp across the Presidio military reservation, and crossed the bleak hills on the south flank of the Golden Gate; passing the neat rows of houses marshaled with stiff precision in right lines about the well-kept lawns and tidy barracks, he followed the road to where it made a sharp turn about the old adobes, last relics of the Spanish occupancy of the eighteenth century. Then he struck off across the barren wastes that stretch between the Presidio and Fort Point.

A gentle mist brooded overhead, and through its hazy envelope the sun was visible, a great red ball high in the eastern sky. The turbulent sea beat with mad fury against its rocky barriers, and the roar of incoming breakers echoed like a sullen

murmur in the distance. One moment ploughing through loose sand in which his feet sank to his ankles, the next treading wet bogs where unseen springs renewed the earth's humidity and fostered a vegetation of surprising luxuriance, he at length seated himself upon a wind-swept slope and viewed the solitary wastes below. No effort he could make served to shake off the oppressive influence. Earth and air and sky were filled with the same pitiless refrain.

The distant rocks assumed fantastic and forbidding shapes. A freshly upturned heap of earth by his side, to his distorted vision, took the form of a new-made grave; the waters of a shallow brook which wound its way through the valley below, borrowing its color from some hidden chemical in the soil, were dark as the waters of Lethe; a little bird that poised itself for a moment on a low shrub near by and trilled forth its plaintive lay, sang the requiem of buried hopes. Resting his elbow on the ground and supporting his chin in his hand, he girded up his mental strength anew, in a vain effort to solve the problem of existence. Reviewing his meagre resources, conning the lessons of past experience, bitterly deploring his errors, questioning the justice of his repeated misfortunes, wrestling with despair, he absently fixed his eyes upon the form of an armed sentry slowly advancing up the western road. Suddenly he was startled by a movement in a thicket of tall brakes below, and the figure of a man, crouching away from the sentry's line of vision, presented itself to the lonely watcher.

"Burke!"

"King!"

Two miserable men, alike outcasts from the world's respect, gazed into each other's faces with unconcealed aversion. The man who had arisen from his hiding-place in the brakes was emaciated almost to a skeleton. His head was bare, and his matted hair was entangled with the burrs of a low plant common to that region; his grimy face exhibited a beard of several weeks' growth; his ragged clothes but ill-sufficed to hide his shivering form, while the long nails that terminated his bony fingers had a claw-like aspect, as if they had learned to dig beneath the soil for sustenance.

As the man encountered King's searching eyes and caught his startled exclamation, he dropped to the ground with a weak gesture of surrender.

"Game 's up!" he feebly acknowledged.

As King viewed the hunted creature before him, and beheld the approaching sentry, there came before his mental vision the text of an advertisement he had scanned in the columns of a newspaper a few days previously.

$2,000 REWARD. — The State of California offers one thousand dollars ($1,000) reward for the capture, dead or alive, of the convict Jerry W. Burke, escaped from San Quentin on the night of November 30th, 188–. Said Burke was arrested in San Bernardino County, in the year 1876, for the crime of highway robbery, and sentenced to a term of twenty years' confinement. He is a man of strong physique, six feet one inch in height, with brown hair, sandy beard, and at the time of his escape was

clothed in a brown woolen shirt, black and white pants with lengthwise stripes, and had on a pair of low cowhide shoes.

The board of supervisors of San Bernardino County offers a similar reward for his recapture.

Two thousand dollars! A prodigious amount in the eyes of a starving man. The avenue of escape from all his troubles was flung wide open before him, if he chose to avail himself of the chance. And yet there was that on the face of the man who cowered in abject humility beside him, which made him pause and reflect whether relief at such a price were worth the having. He, too, had known what it was to be friendless and forlorn, to hearken in apprehension for the sound of approaching footsteps; and if, in the strength of youth and the recollection of virtuous teachings, he had chosen to turn and face his penalty, he was none the less sensible to the horrors of the fugitive's situation.

"Pretty hard work to grub a living from this soil, old man?" King was temporizing with himself and the temptations that assailed him. Burke faced the situation with the courage of despair.

"You 're in luck this time, King, d—— you! You can pay back the old score now with interest."

"Then you were the one, Burke?" King's tone was less expressive of interrogation than of quick conviction. At the convict's remark his mind traveled intuitively to the day, some six years gone by, when he had looked forward with eager craving to a speedy release, and the score of credits won by years of patient endurance and faithful compliance

with prison regulations had been wiped away in a moment by the discovery of an undermined wall and some rude tools secreted in his cell. It was a wrong, the enormity of which could not be estimated; which, beside prolonging the term of his imprisonment, had set him finally at liberty without even the seal of the prison authorities' approval, and increased the opprobrium he already bore in the community with which his lot was cast; which had added another weight to the heavy burden that taxed his mother's feeble strength, with what direct influence on the events that followed would never be known.

King's face underwent a subtle change as he reviewed this grim passage of his career, and a fierce greed for vengeance gleamed in his eyes. His jaw was hard and set. The sardonic likeness of a smile that hovered about his compressed lips told Burke that he had nothing to hope. His sentence of doom finally came in hoarse, choked utterance.

"Pay for it! Yes, you scoundrel. And a heavy debt it is. Robbing a man of four of the best years of his life; of the last grain of trust in the hearts of his fellows; of a last sight of his mother's face!"

The convict cringed visibly under this indictment. The most hardened criminal finds a panacea in forgetfulness, and shrinks from being brought face to face with the consequences of his misdeeds. He did not attempt any defense, but spoke in a weary, hopeless tone.

"Don't pile it on too thick, King! I pay heavily

enough. You lost four years, hang you! But you know the law in a case like mine — all my credits gone, and ten years' extra confinement. And I had twenty years before! My last chance for an honest life is gone. And my wife and babies — oh, God!"

The slow tread of the sentry was plainly audible as he commenced to climb the slope. The two men were silent and motionless — the one doggedly awaiting his fate, the other watching him with an inscrutable expression in his eyes. Nearer and nearer the sentry approached, until he stood a dark figure on the crest of the hill above, where he halted a moment to cast his eyes over the barren landscape and rocky seashore. The faintest cry, a beckoning gesture, would have attracted his attention and brought him promptly to the spot; but King sat as if turned to stone. Not a muscle of his face quivered, not a movement of his body betrayed his presence to the guard.

The vagabond heard the firm tread of the retreating sentry, and gazed with wondering incredulity into King's calm eyes.

"What, King? Oh, Lord! You don't mean it!"

The wretched man put his hands to his eyes to force back the weak tears that welled forth as he comprehended his adversary's generous act. Then the two men sat on in silence.

"What are your plans, Burke?" King's voice was low and kind. He had fought down the demon that had risen in his heart.

"To Gautemala. She is there — and the children. They have a little coffee plantation. It was her brother's plan" —

He broke off and clutched King's shoulder in excitement, pointing to a dim, ghostly shape just rounding a point of rocks on the shore.

"There she comes — the boat I was waiting for."

They looked silently into each other's eyes. Something of his lost manhood struggled back to life and shone through the hard lines on the fugitive's face, but he would not take the proffered hand of the man he had wronged.

"I 'm not fit, King," he said, shaking his head. Then in a sudden access of resolution, "But I shan't forget. You 've given me back my liberty. I swear it shall not be ill used."

King watched the little sail-boat receive its living freight, then rose and pressed his way westward, hoping to find the rest of spirit which is frequently the compensation for great bodily exhaustion, and thus found his way at last to a narrow cañon with precipitous walls, where the breakers of the incoming tide cast themselves with unavailing fury, and fell back spent and exhausted. At the mouth of the narrow inlet, where the water swept past with a mighty surge, and the eddying waves told of a deep undercurrent, a curious bit of seaweed had lodged, far down on the slippery face of the rocks. He swung himself down to secure it, with no foothold but slimy grooves hollowed out by the breakers, fastening his hands in lichenous

growths in the crevices of the rocks above. As he regained the summit of the cliff in safety, he looked back with dry wonderment upon the slippery descent and the dark pool beneath. He picked up a small fragment of rock and tossed it into the water. It disappeared, leaving not so much as a ripple in its wake. Just as silently and pitilessly would the waters have closed over a wasted human life.

He tore himself away from the spot, frequently pausing and looking back, in strange irresolution, at the silent pool overhung by slippery rocks.

The sun had set, and darkness fell like a tender mantle upon the city, hushing its strife, and offering a charitable cover for its misery, its sorrow, and its sin. The night was damp and chill, but the man who toiled along the road that crossed the bleak summit of the western hills was unconscious of the antics of the wind which skulked along the road and lay in wait for him at every turn and bend, tearing open his light overcoat in petulant gusts, or striking him full in the face in angry blasts. He did not see the city, a mass of dark and indistinguishable objects, following the irregular outlines of the hills, and scintillating with a hundred thousand lights. Once he looked back, and saw the tall cross, planted upon Lone Mountain by the hands of the pious Mission fathers, standing white and shining above the shadows, as the thick clouds overhead parted for a moment and a single shaft of moonlight fell to earth.

On his way through the streets he was jostled by brisk pedestrians, hastening to happy homes

where wives and children eagerly awaited their coming. Laborers in coarse attire emerged from corner groceries, clay pipes between their teeth, their arms laden with bundles, and a look of stupid content upon their faces. Street cars, freighted with merry passengers, glided past, and occasionally a cab sped over the pavement, its occupant looking intently through the window to distinguish the number of his destination. A ragged fellow, seeing a stranger approaching alone and on foot, waylaid him on a street corner, and began his doleful whine for help, but before King had spoken a word in reply, some mysterious bond of communication warned the man that he had approached another unfortunate, and he slunk off without finishing his appeal.

As King plodded down Geary Street, he came to an old building of gray stone, whose walls were half buried beneath a dense growth of English ivy, which framed the arched doorway. Some meeting was being held inside, and through the stained-glass windows the light fell in brilliant patches on the moist, green sward, revealing the outlines of a low gothic tomb, where all that was mortal of Starr King had been placed by loving hands, in sight of the church that had been the scene of his unselfish ministrations. In his extremity of need the desolate man outside clung to the iron palings, while his heart cried aloud to the friend of his boyhood days, but no answer came from the silent sleeper.

He reached his room, and lighting the solitary gas-burner, looked around him. Heaven pity the

man or woman who goes at night to a room which no other human eyes ever see, and whose floors never echo to the sound of a friendly tread. King's face had all day worn the look of a man pursued by a foe he dared not meet.

At last he turned and faced his pursuer. Why not yield, once for all, to the phantom ready to fold him in an icy embrace that meant oblivion and peace? He was not a coward, but there comes to many logical men a time when they are impelled to question whether life is worth the struggle. He was snared in the meshes of prejudice and unbelief. The valiant resolves with which he had taken up life anew were strangled in their infancy. Somewhere in the universe there must be room for him, a place where he could work out the problem of existence.

The refrain of a little song he had some time heard constantly recurred to him, — "Six feet of earth make us all of one size." The idea did not present itself to him in any finite sense. He possessed a firm faith in the immortality of the soul, as they phrase it in the old church creeds. The grave was merely a gateway to the future, a Procrustean bed through which the spirit, divested of all worldly advantages, released from accidents of fortune, of material condition, no longer restrained by physical disabilities or worldly impediments, could pass untrammeled to the hands of its Maker. The body was little more than a garment, he argued, — a mere "flesh overcoat," which the soul must some day throw aside. Could there be any

deadly sin in the spirit seeking its own enfranchisement?

As a rule, he disapproved of suicide. There were few men who did not owe a duty to society, to family, to some one near and dear. In his case there were no restraining influences. He could not think of a soul on earth who would sorrow for his loss. Society had no place for him; even the great working world had repulsed him. He realized a sense of fitness in the deed which should crown a life disgraced with a suicide's grave. For a long time he sat without stirring, his hands clasped behind his head. Could his spiritual vision have been opened, who can tell what pitying faces might have greeted him. Once he started and looked eagerly around the room, unable to divest himself of a fancy that his mother's hand had been laid softly upon his head. But he could only see the phantom at his elbow, which mocked and jeered and beckoned him on.

He rose at length and went to a bureau drawer. A small mahogany case was lying there. Unlocking it, he drew out a revolver and examined its charges. His face was calm and his hands steady. He looked about the room, and idly wondered who would be its next occupant. Some compassionate thought of his quiet landlady flitted through his mind, and he stood for a moment in quiet reflection. Whatever the subject of his thoughts, they bore fruit in action. He caught up his hat, and thrusting the weapon into his breast-pocket, hurriedly left the room, and passed out into the street.

A dim fancy framed itself in his clouded brain that he would like to reach the lonely rock overhanging the deep pool, where he had wandered in the afternoon. No food had passed his lips for more than twenty-four hours, and he was weak and exhausted; but he plodded wearily down Third Street, and along Mission, past brightly-lighted shop-windows with their array of showy goods, to where a tide of people was pouring out of the opera house, and he found his progress momentarily checked.

CHAPTER X.

RECOGNITION.

It was Saturday night, and a large and fashionable audience had gathered at Wade's Opera House to celebrate the first appearance in the city of a famous prima donna. Although far past her youth, the cantatrice was a woman of rare personal charms, and as she made her appearance upon the stage she was greeted with the well-bred courtesy characteristic of a California audience, — a carefully modulated note of applause, deficient neither in cordiality nor grace, which yet conveyed an intimation of something withheld, of pent-up possibilities of enthusiasm, which only an actual demonstration of her gifts could evoke.

She had received the tribute due her fame. The spontaneous expression of the favor of her audience could only be awarded upon the proof of her power.

There was one among the audience who divided attention with the singer. She sat in a lower proscenium box, surrounded by a gay party, and leaned forward in her chair, her arm resting lightly upon the cushioned balustrade, so intent upon the scene before her that she was unconscious of the glasses focused on her from all quarters of the house. Clad in mauve velvet, with a great cluster of purple vio-

lets on her bosom, the pliant fabric of her dress revealed the exquisite modeling of her figure, and her head rose from the simple costume with the queenly poise and delicate beauty of a flower that has burst its sheath. The coiled masses of brown hair, under the scintillating circles of light above, caught a golden sheen, and her face was animated with the divine light and glow of early womanhood.

The voice of the singer soared heavenward, in rich, full notes that uplifted every soul, then died away in a gentle cadence like the sighing of the summer breeze. It rang out in glad notes of exultation, or sobbed and languished, waking echoes of passion and pain. It swelled in triumph, wailed in supplication, mourned, found consolation, rejoiced, and finally ceased with a trill of melody, pure and sweet as the notes of a bird.

There succeeded the perfect silence that is the highest tribute ever paid to noble effort. Then the house shook with a storm of applause.

People rose to their feet and cheered in a frenzy of joy. Women clapped their gloved hands, or sobbed aloud in hysterical delight. Floral offerings flew so thickly through the air that the singer was obscured from view. Smiling ushers dragged across the stage various eccentric monstrosities of the florist's art; and Margaret Thaxter, slowly awaking from her reverie as the tumult subsided, caught from her breast the bunch of violets and flung it to the singer.

The impulsive act called forth new and deafen-

ing demonstrations from the excited people, directed as much toward the beautiful woman who had impulsively despoiled her toilet to do honor to the singer, as to the diva herself. The cantatrice caught the infection of the popular sentiment, and turned with a radiant smile to the donor, who drew back in the shadow of the box.

The play was over, and Margaret Thaxter, the centre of an admiring party, crossed the pavement beneath an awning, to where a row of carriages stood along the curb. A man who loitered on the sidewalk was arrested by the sight, and paused to stand grimly in the pouring rain, thinking of what life had brought to her, and of what he had lost for her sake. A singular change in her face caught his eye, and he sought to grasp its meaning. The old girlish prettiness had vanished, to be replaced by something infinitely more noble and beautiful. Scorned and disgraced, prematurely aged, with all the light and promise gone from his life, he looked upon the woman who had unwittingly been his spirit of evil, and as he marked the perfect composure of her face, he pictured the contempt that would curve her lips and flash from her eyes if he should present himself in the midst of her gay friends, — he, bowed down beneath the weight of crime, and disfigured with the curse of a social blight.

Yielding to an unreasoning and despairing impulse, he pressed forward, and her friends fell back in dismay at the impudence of the shabby-looking man, his seedy garments dripping with the rain, who had so rudely forced his way into their charmed

circle. He was conscious only of a desire to draw down upon himself her scorn and disdain. His cup of misery needed that one drop to be filled to overflowing. A whispered intelligence ran round the little group, but the central figure remained unconscious, until she turned from a gay word with a friend and saw him, standing in the full glow of the electric light, a wan and haggard apparition with avenging eyes that seemed to say, "Behold your work!"

Every vestige of color forsook her face, but she displayed no other outward manifestation of emotion. Bowing with the grave, marked courtesy we pay to a friend who, however humble, is robed in the dignity of sorrow or affliction, she addressed him in clear, vibrating tones.

"Remember, I expect to see you at my reception Monday night, Mr. King."

He stood on the wet pavement and watched the carriage disappear in the maze of vehicles that thronged the street, conscious of a singular change in himself. He was no longer the weak misanthrope, feebly surrendering himself to a miserable fate. A new energy coursed through every vein. He seemed to have undergone a sudden moral regeneration. What was the exact nature of this powerful influence which had wrought so rapid and miraculous a transformation, and infused such vital strength and courage into his life, he did not stop to analyze. It was enough that he felt no longer the poor and hapless coward he had been an hour before, but stood once more a man among his fellow-men.

The crowd had dispersed, but he remained in the same place and attitude, his eyes fixed on vacancy, while his brain leaped into new activity. Obstacles which before seemed insurmountable became so many mole-hills. He would start out on the morrow and canvass the city to obtain honest work. A truce to all false delicacy, to pusillanimous confessions and timid pledges. Had she not thought him worthy of honorable recognition?

A policeman, who had been narrowly observing him from a comfortable post in the shelter of a doorway near by, strode to his side and rudely touched his shoulder.

"Better move on!" he said, menacingly.

Instead of humbly yielding to the mandate, as he would have done twenty-four hours before, King shook off the touch and turned upon the officer with the resentment natural to any inoffensive citizen who feels his rights invaded. The blue-coat fell back with a muttered apology.

The incident served to recall the loiterer to a sense that he was making himself conspicuous in a public place, and after a moment's delay, a needful act of self-assertion, he turned and walked steadily down Market Street to Kearny. Uncle Lazarus, a tall, stoop-shouldered Israelite, was in the act of locking his safe, preliminary to closing for the night. He lifted his head with an impatient expression at the sound of entering footsteps. No customer worth having was liable to make an appearance at that hour. His countenance changed as he met his visitor's eye. Whatever the man's errand, he meant business.

King drew the revolver from his pocket, and laid it carelessly upon the counter.

"A toy I have no use for," he simply said.

The pawnbroker examined the weapon curiously, raising his eyebrows slightly as he perceived the untouched cartridges. The weapon was a costly, silver-mounted affair, of foreign workmanship, a relic of youthful extravagance. Under ordinary circumstances the usurer would have expatiated upon the rusty barrels, the defective action, the old-fashioned style, with an adroit allusion to the depressed state of the money market, and the effect of the excessive rains on the crops of the coming season; but frequent contact with varying types of human nature had not been without its lesson. He pushed a small gold piece over the counter. King pocketed it and walked out, whistling as he went.

A brightly lighted French restaurant next attracted his eye. It was almost midnight, and only a few belated guests were scattered about the tables. The negro waiter, in a white linen coat, and with a napkin over his arm, who stepped up to serve him, gave a pleased exclamation of recognition. It was his old acquaintance, the dish-washer at the penitentiary. He insisted upon relieving the guest of his wet overcoat, and hanging it where it would dry. Instead of the simple coffee and rolls which King had ordered, the man placed before him an appetizing little supper, composed of the best viands the depleted larder would afford. Meanwhile, as he busied himself arranging the dishes and at-

tending to the comforts of the guest, he carried on a low-voiced conversation.

How long had he been out? "Six weeks. Got place as waitah one week aftah." Did his employer know his antecedents? "Not much! Tink I 'se a fool?"

"What if he should find out some day?"

"Not let him find out. Wait three, fo' months, tell him myself. He know me den. Am shoah he can trust me. Tell him now, he be sho' I steal his money; maybe he fea' people know me, and his business done get ruined. Heah 'bout Stubbs? Some fellahs blow up powdah magazine; had a big fight wid three fellahs; tink dey get away. Stubbs get a cut in his ahm; but he put out de match and he shoot. Warden get him pardoned. Out next week. Dey say he lehn de locksmith trade mighty good; say he best safe-cracker on de whole coast. Reckon he go tinkerin' at lock on Safe Deposit next — he, he! Not have no mo' dat chicken salad, sir? Mighty good fo' de digestion, sir. Going, Mr. King? Get ovahcoat fust; rainin' right hard yet. If you 'd do me de honah, sir, heah 's an umbrella. I got no use fo' it; sleep in kitchen. No hurry 'bout retuhning, — no mo' rain dis season."

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIENDLY INTERVIEW.

THE exulting sense of courage and power had not abandoned Philip King when he awoke the next morning, but as he calmly reviewed the occurrences of the previous night, one fact stood preëminent before him. He must not compromise this fearless friend by taking advantage of the honor she had so publicly shown him. Whatever her motive, — whether it sprang from the pitiful impulse of the moment, or from some stronger, deeper purpose, nothing but ill could result from assuming the ambiguous position in which an acceptance would place them both. He would go to her early on the morrow, and, while thanking her for her gracious acknowledgment of the old friendship and confessing the renewal of self-respect it had inspired within him, explain to her why he could not avail himself of the courtesy she had extended.

The next day he walked with firm, ringing tread the street he had hitherto sedulously avoided, no longer shrinking from the gaze of passers-by, but meeting fearlessly the glances that were cast upon him.

He opened the iron gate and proceeded slowly up the walk, noting in his passage the changes that the

years had wrought. The small palms he had seen when he last visited the place had grown to stately trees. The bed of pansies that had gleamed a brilliant spot of color from the green setting of the lawn, had given way to a mammoth harp, strung with blood-red coleus, and set in a frame of marigolds. The fuchsia that formerly wreathed the base of the bay-window had made a daring ascent to the roof, and dropped its red and purple pendants from the eaves. The house itself was little changed. Years of sunshine and rain and fog had imparted a grayish tinge to its stuccoed front, and a stained-glass window had been inserted. Aside from these slight alterations, it was the same. Even the gray-haired woman who opened the door bore a familiar look; but she stared at the new-comer as if he were a wraith.

"Master Philip?" The old soul was incredulous.

"Yes, Betsey." In the old days when he had freely come and gone from the house the stern-visaged creature had been a veritable dragon, ever on the alert to discountenance an excess of gayety on the part of her young mistress, — a grim wardsman to be circumvented and assuaged. But now she looked into the man's face, and her old eyes were shocked and dismayed at the story they read.

"Is Miss Thaxter at home?"

"The same voice, but the face — what a change! Did a body ever see such a change? Yes, I'm thinking she 's in her room. Just walk into the library, and we 'll see," and the good soul bustled

on before him, ever repeating under her breath, "Dear boy! what a change, what a change!"

He stood looking out of a window upon the lawn, when he heard a soft rustle in the hall, and the woman he sought stood in the door. In her neat morning robe, with a touch of some bright color at her neck, she seemed so like the same winsome girl to whom he had talked sweet nonsense a dozen years before, that for a moment he started to meet her, oblivious of all that had intervened. Then he recalled the present, with its grim shadow of disgrace.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Miss Thaxter," he said, coolly, a fierce anger struggling into his heart at the sight of her beauty, and the consciousness of his old passion wakening to life, in spite of all it had cost him. "I merely came to offer an apology and a regret. I cannot attend your reception Monday night."

"And why?" She had taken a low seat near the fire, and spoke with the easy unconcern with which she might have challenged the whim of an ordinary man of the world, who chose to withdraw himself from social life for a season.

"It is hardly necessary to explain the reason."

"But I am not accustomed to excuse my friends so lightly. Pray take a seat, Mr. King. Do you not find a fire refreshing these chilly mornings?"

He would not pretend to heed her little byplay of small talk, but proceeded directly to the point at issue.

"Why? Because I am no longer one of your

gay society world. I have forfeited my place in public esteem" —

"Retrieve it!"

Her air of easy composure was gone. A lofty courage shone in her face, and her voice had the ring of inspiration. For a moment an answering spark leaped into his eyes and met her own in quick response. But the light as speedily faded.

"You speak so confidently. You do not know the humiliating consciousness of guilt that fetters courage and paralyzes ambition. The worst enemy a man has to contend with in such a struggle is the doubt of his own capacity to withstand temptation. Still, if one could stand alone, compromise and involve no one but himself in his success or failure! But to risk bringing disgrace upon a friend — I cannot do it."

She thought he had never looked half as manly as when he made this brave self-arraignment, but she replied only to his closing words.

"If my position in society is held by so slight a tenure, it is not worth the keeping."

"But what is to be gained?"

"A wider sphere of usefulness; purging away the stain that rests upon your name; honor, trust, — everything worth having. Do you mean to say that you are satisfied with your present life? Does it fulfill in any way the ambition of your early life — your mother's hopes?"

She waited long for a response. The reference to his mother had stirred the hidden springs of his being. The life that she had planned and the life that was rose in grim contrast before his vision.

"You forget the force of example, for the sake of which I have suffered so long and justly. The interests of society are concerned."

"Show society a better example. Show that a man can prove superior to circumstances, even when those circumstances involve his own error. Give it the stimulating example of one who retrieves a false step through his own honest exertions. Take your stand in society as a man who has expiated his offense against its laws; who is entitled to a place of respect, and means to keep it. I know what you mean to say," she cried, lifting her hand in deprecation. "Of course, there will be plenty to misunderstand, to fancy you are governed by some vulgar ambition. Let them alone; they will learn differently by and by."

"It has never been done before," he returned, after a pause. "I have heard and known of convicts who have figured in society under a false name, concealing the circumstances of their crime, but never of one who openly acknowledged his error, and yet retained his place."

"All the more necessity for a brave man to pave the way for those who come after him," she earnestly rejoined, "for as long as the world endures, men of true principles and upright life will lose their moral balance and expiate a moment's weakness with years of penance."

"I want you to straighten up," she said, lightly touching the shoulders that had learned to bow beneath their load of shame. "Carry yourself so!" and with the light pressure of her hands she made

him stand erect before her. "But please be seated. And now tell me," she continued, assuming a business air that sat quaintly on her, "how are you doing? What occupation do you pursue?"

The touch of her hands and her playful action, following as they did upon her earnest, womanly words, wakened the old affection into new life and force, but his face betrayed no sign of the emotions that were swaying him.

"Oh, I am doing very well. You know I learned a good trade during my imprisonment," he replied, evasively, and would have turned to go. She looked in his eyes steadily, and with a searching gaze. They wavered and fell.

"Tell me honestly. Have you any steady occupation?"

"Not just now," he confessed, moving uneasily toward the door, for the conversation was taking a turn he would fain avoid; "but I expect to be busy soon. It is only a question of time. One must wait for such things."

"How long have you waited already?" The question startled him by its very directness and simplicity.

"I don't think it is quite fair to make me explain all the details of my situation. Why should I trouble you with what you could neither understand nor help?"

"Do you think I am merely questioning you in cold blood, to gratify an idle curiosity? You shall tell me. They do not trust you because of what you have been." A flame leaped into her cheeks,

but her honest eyes looked a fearless challenge. He could no longer withstand her sweet seriousness of voice, her resolute probing for his hidden wounds, with the gravity of a physician who hurts that he may heal.

"I see you do not mean to spare me," he said. "Very well. It has been hard. The way is not clear yet."

"What have you done since you left the State Museum?"

"Patrolled the streets for work."

"What sort of work?"

"Any honest labor to which I could turn my hand."

"For instance?"

"Work at my trade, copyist, clerk — any vacancy that was open to an industrious man."

"With what success?"

"I have occupied the proud position of night watchman on a lumber pier — a temporary place, as substitute. I drove an omnibus car seventeen hours a day, at the handsome rate of one dollar and seventy-five cents per diem, for a month, when three days' illness cost me my place. I also had the honor of breaking rock and shoveling sand on the sea wall, and by a lucky accident was promoted to the proud position of a carpenter on the long warehouse. I own that about that date I cherished the illusion that some time in the remote future I might achieve the preëminence of a master-workman; but my hopes were dashed to the ground. The superintendent asked me where I learned my trade."

He had remained standing by the mantel, toying with a costly bit of Sevres ware that stood on a plush-covered shelf above. Margaret Thaxter listened with quiet attention, but at his concluding words she rose hastily and stepped to the window, so that her face was turned away for a moment. When she resumed her seat she held her handkerchief lightly pressed to her lips.

"And now what has my small mentor to suggest?" Margaret Thaxter was by no means a woman of inferior stature, but as he looked down upon her with a strange, tremulous smile, seeing only the moisture that dimmed the brightness of her eyes, the diminutive fell unconsciously from his lips. The first touch of human sympathy that had come to him after years of proscription and almost universal distrust unnerved him oddly. Yet the look he gave her had in it the suggestion of manly strength. He was thinking how mean a stimulus the man had who battled only for himself. Had that dream of the by-gone years, that dream that was never to be realized, only reached fruition, how strong he might have felt to do and to endure.

"Why have you not gone among those you used to know, those who were acquainted with your capabilities?" Her voice, with its quiet business air, brought him back to actualities.

"Because I would not cast the burden of my troubles upon my friends. The experience with Rutherford was an accident, brought about through a chance meeting and his own persistent self-immolation. The result was enough to persuade me of

the injustice of taking such a course, if I had needed persuasion."

"But how do you suppose other people account for your action? Nothing is more important for you in your present position than to stand right with the community. Have you never thought of the suspicions such an avoidance might excite?"

"Never until this moment. I did not suppose any one cared enough to discuss me or my actions."

"People never shirk their responsibilities where their neighbors' business is concerned," she said, laconically. "Will you let me tell you where I think you have erred? I think you have been trying to make your way in the wrong field. It is not your past life alone that hurts you; it is your total unfitness for what you try to do. You were never cut out for a trade. Men see it and realize it. They like to be able to condescend to a man in their employ. What is more, the disparity between you increases their liability to distrust. They would be twice as ready to have faith in one of their own class who has gone astray. There is no use denying that we have classes in this country, as well as elsewhere. Wherever men come together in a community, kind will crystallize with kind, and each one find his proper level, so that different social strata must inevitably result. For a man of superior social standing, of higher culture, of refined tastes, to come to them and claim the recognition he has not ventured to ask from his own set — it is too great a temptation to meet his intellectual pretensions with the assertion of their moral superiority. Don't you see?"

He nodded gravely, wondering that a woman's quick intuition should so readily solve the problem that had baffled a man's broader analytical powers.

"You should go among men of your own kind, claim recognition, and then prove your claim by consistent action."

"With what result, may be predicated from my experience in the Mining Bureau."

"That was a mere political pretext. It was premature for your friends to undertake a public support at that time. For all that, one cannot do without them. I was reading a book by a great philosopher the other day, and he says, 'There is no such thing in creation as an independent, unconnected existence; nor could anything survive in that condition.' But there are different ways of acknowledging the dependence. Assume an attitude which will enable those who like to show their friendship, but will exact no man's favor. In other words, follow a business which demands a proper exercise of your abilities, and at the same time brings you in contact with men of your own class."

"I concede your logic," he frankly yielded; "but what do you advise?"

"I heard you quite distinguished yourself by your method of microscopical analysis of rock during your brief connection with the Mining Bureau. Able assayers and chemists are always in demand in San Francisco."

"True." His face brightened, and he took a turn about the room. "I still have my microscope. I assure you I should not, if it had not been too

old-fashioned to be salable; but it will answer all my purposes."

"And I think it will be well, as a preliminary step, to allow your name to be proposed for membership of the Academy of Sciences. That will give you a recognized position among scientific men, and may help you in other ways. I myself am a member of the academy. Perhaps you know that I have developed a taste for science, Mr. King?"

"I understand it is quite the fashion for young women to have such notions nowadays."

"Yes. Since we met last I have taken up several — notions," with a slight halt and a faint emphasis as she came to the concluding word.

"There are other matters to be considered," he said, thoughtfully. "However, I will think of it."

"If you are thinking of the needful expense in starting," she commenced, with heightened color; but he checked her with an imperative gesture.

"Not that. Do not let me have the degradation of owing dependence to a woman. Rather than that, let me lie in a gutter" —

He was arrested by the piteous appeal in her face, and back of that another underlying sentiment that bared itself for a moment in agonized self-accusation. He passed his hand over his eyes, in bewilderment and consternation. Was this strange divination of human weakness growing into a mania, that he should fancy for the instant he detected a consciousness of guilt in the woman he revered above all the world?

CHAPTER XII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST.

As King sprang lightly up the last flight of steps that led to his lodging-house, he stopped short, arrested by a charming picture on the lawn before him. On the green sward a little child was playing, a noble boy some three years old, clad in a kilt suit plaided in purple and gold, with a yellow sash knotted about his hips, and brown curls, touched with gold by the sunlight, floating over his shoulders. His unconscious brown eyes sparkled with dreamy enjoyment; his lips were slightly parted; and although the flush of health was on his cheek, and his well-rounded limbs and supple figure revealed a perfect physical development, his movements were so light and full of grace that he scarcely seemed to touch the earth as he ran, but glided hither and thither like a bunch of thistle-down floating on the wind.

"What is it, Leon?"

The question interrupted the boy's play, but did not disturb the dreamy unconsciousness in his eyes.

"A butterfly. We were playing together. Where is he now, Philip? Has he gone a far ways up in the sky?" and the child searched the blue depths of the zenith with gentle wonder. As he turned

away his head King discovered that to one of the soft curls a magnificent butterfly was clinging, his golden wings outspread, and the great peacock eyes on their tips reflecting back the light in burnished shades of blue and bronze.

"Shall I show you where he is, Leon? Hold very still."

With a light touch of his hand he persuaded the gorgeous creature to release his hold upon the silken lock and accept the hospitality of his outstretched finger. The child turned and viewed him with a cry of mingled awe and admiration. Racing up and down the lawn with the glorious insect was a very different matter from entertaining him in such close quarters. Then he smiled a farewell upon his quondam playmate.

"Now fly!"

As if in obedience to his command, the butterfly spread his golden pinions and mounted skyward. They watched him until he poised at length on the fragrant blossoming bough of a lemon verbena; then the little one turned to King with curious speculation in his face, and spoke in a soft, sweet voice.

"Philip, will you tell me do horses and pigs have wings when they die?"

"Why, my little comrade, what has put that into your head?"

"So they can go to heaven. How could they go if God did n't give them wings? But tell me," he persisted.

"What formidable questions for a small boy!"

laughed King, seizing his questioner and swinging him up to a seat on his shoulder, steadying him with one uplifted arm, and holding tightly in his own the little warm hand that passed around his neck. The child bore the sudden transportation to this elevated perch with composure and evident satisfaction. It was plain that a perfect understanding existed between these two, and that they were old and established friends.

"If you don't tell me I shall find out myself," gravely asserted the boy.

"How?"

"I will go up to heaven myself, and knock on God's door, and he will take me into his house and tell me."

"My dear little boy, I could n't tell you if I would," said King, unwilling to destroy any tender fancy the child might have cherished. "We can't know everything in this world; so be patient and wait."

"Then I must go on praying God to give them wings," said the little fellow, with resignation.

"Praying!" exclaimed King, recalling the monotonous forms of prayer which he had been accustomed to repeat, without deviation, in his own childhood. "And does your mother teach you to pray for horses and pigs?"

"My mamma says praying is talking to God," replied the child, with dignity. "I talk to him to make me tell true, and let me buy my mamma a nice house and a carriage to ride in, and make me not afraid of cows; and when I come to a mud-

puddle help me to jump over the mud-puddle and not fall in; and make all the mens good, and have my papa be good, too."

King felt that these communications were reaching a point where delicacy forbade his receiving them. They had entered his room, and the boy, swung down from his high seat, had stretched himself at full length on a rug before the grate. His host interrupted his reminiscences by tossing him a couple of gay-colored advertising cards which he had picked up on the streets; and as the child seized eagerly upon them, and rolled over to raise himself upon his elbows and feast his eyes upon his newly acquired treasures, King pondered the words he had heard.

It was not the first time he had anxiously speculated upon the mystery which overhung the occupants of the cottage. The mother was an innocent young Danish girl, who lived a quiet, secluded life, discouraging all advances on the part of her neighbors, apparently too engrossed in her household cares and in her love for her child to entertain any interests outside of her family circle.

There were rumors of an erratic husband, who came and went at irregular intervals, under the cover of darkness; and King, returning from an evening stroll, had more than once perceived a dark figure slouch along the dim passage-way, passing noiselessly into the cottage, as if desirous of escaping observation.

The air of secrecy that enshrouded the little household was emphasized by the singular reserve

of the young matron; and when one more bold than the others had pressed her for her name, complaining that they were ignorant of the proper form in which to address her, she had answered with a quick blush and appealing look —

"My name is Pauline. Be so good and call me Mrs. Pauline."

The odd title had been generally adopted, and Mrs. Pauline became a recognized factor in the humble neighborhood.

In King's lonely and desolate state the child had first attracted his attention, stretching out little dimpled hands as he passed, and by many a gentle art and loving act taking up his abode in the heart of the friendless man. As his fondness for the little fellow increased, King became more and more apprehensive that the father might belong to that class of skilled professionals so adept in their criminal callings, so successful in covering up their tracks, that their identity remains forever a mystery to the police.

He looked up from his meditations to find the large brown eyes of the boy calmly regarding him, and made another desperate effort to grasp the strangely fleeting resemblance that often puzzled him. Could the hardened features of a fellow-convict have aught in common with the sweet purity of the infant countenance? He spurned the thought indignantly.

"What nonsense!"

He stooped and stroked the boy's bright hair in gentle atonement for his suspicions, as he crossed

the room, and, opening a small trunk, took out a dress suit of fine dark cloth, which he spread upon the bed and subjected to critical scrutiny. Momentary consternation seized him as he saw its multitudinous folds and wrinkles.

"My mamma will make them nice."

The boy had followed him, and was viewing the clothes with sympathetic interest.

"Leon, you are a jewel."

To be sure, he had seen the little woman busy with her flatirons as he passed her door. He laid the garments over one arm, and catching up the boy in the other, ran quickly down the steps and presented himself at the door of the cottage. The mother looked up, and recognized him with an air of pleased surprise.

Her gratification was undisguised when she learned his errand, and beheld the garments with their countless folds. It was the first opportunity he had ever given her to return any of the numerous little services she had received at his hands.

"My irons are just right, Mr. King," she cheerfully assured him, lifting one in her right hand and noting the quick sizzle as she touched it with moistened fingers. "Shall I bring them up to you when I have finished, or will you sit down here and wait? That is right. Not there. Take this small rocker by the window."

She shook out the cushion of the chair, and brushed back a vagrant branch of honeysuckle that had thrust one long slender stem, rioting with fragrant blossoms sheltered by stalwart green leaves,

into the cosy room. King watched the action in silent amusement, speculating on the difference in certain national traits, which made this sunny-tempered little European resent as an unseemly intruder what a woman of his own race would have hailed with unalloyed delight. Then his eyes wandered idly about the room, growing perplexed as they rested upon little signs of elegance and comfort, incongruous features of the humble home. One article arrested his attention — a case of crimson velvet, marked with an elaborate monogram embroidered in silver and gold, from the top of which protruded the ivory handle of a small whisk broom. There was something curiously familiar in the monogram, but, strive as he might, he could not succeed in deciphering the letters that composed it. His reflections were arrested by a little cry of surprise from Mrs. Pauline.

"And you, too, have one of these strange coats, Mr. King. How they would laugh to see them in the old country! I tell my man, the first time I see him in one, he do look so queer, so queer!" She held up the swallow-tail coat as she spoke, laughing again at the recollection. But there was no answering smile on King's sober face. His original hypothesis respecting the mysterious husband was overturned. Thieves and gamblers, fugitives from justice, who ply their nefarious callings under cover of the night, are not given to parading dress suits. Mechanically he recalled a dozen circumstances he had hitherto allowed to pass unobserved. Glancing around the room, and taking an inventory of its

contents by the new light her chance remark had shed, his suspicion was confirmed. This errant spouse, this truant father, was a man belonging to the foremost circles of society; doubtless a welcome visitor in happy homes, who took pure young girls by the hand, or clasped their waists in the ball-room, while this shadowy episode in his life remained unseen and unguessed, like many another fashionable exquisite. Such instances were by no means new to King; but as he found himself brought face to face with the consequences of one of the most deplorable crimes against society, he was conscious of a strong recoil, in which abhorrence of the deed blended with pity and foreboding for the innocent victims. He felt as if he had caught a glimpse into the bottomless pit of an iniquitous deed. With an instinctive delicacy which would have done credit to a man of blameless character, he forebore to follow up the clew unconsciously afforded him, and made no reply to the exclamation of his little neighbor.

As she spread the coat upon the table, preparatory to moistening the creases with a damp sponge, the pockets were inverted, and something fluttered to the floor.

"Ah, Mr. King! You must take better care of your love-letters." She extended the missive to him with an innocent laugh. Forgetting the years that the suit had been shut away in the little trunk, King drew out the sheet of note-paper and curiously examined it, recognizing the answer to a forgotten note of invitation, written in a girl's dainty hand. He folded it quickly as he observed Margaret Thax-

ter's signature, and would have thrust it back into the envelope, but encountered a hidden obstacle. Inverting the envelope, and tapping it softly with his fingers, a faded flower fell upon his knee. Like one who tries to decipher some unknown language whose records are interwoven with his own history, he bent his face over the fragile flower, from which color and perfume had vanished.

As he looked, a series of disjointed recollections presented themselves in dissolving view before his troubled mind. He beheld a rattle-brained young fellow penning a note of invitation to a yachting cruise; a half avowal of protective tenderness that escaped him almost unaware; his return from a gay party late the next morning; a letter, brought by a messenger-boy during his absence, lying on his desk; the eagerness with which he had torn it open, hoping for some response to his fervid utterance; a perfume that issued from some unseen source; the cool and stilted language, that seemed a sharp rebuke to his effusive words, awakening a sense of humiliation and shame; the sudden desperate resolve to win her at whatever cost; the high stakes he had played and lost. Had he then sacrificed honor and manhood and freedom, only to forever forfeit a treasure already in his keeping?

He forgot the scene about him — the fair-haired woman bent low over the ironing-board, the child playing at his feet. Clenching his hand with an unconscious gesture of despair, he groaned aloud. The shy messenger of a girl's affection told its unavailing story after a lapse of twelve weary years.

"Why, Mr. King! What is the matter?"

The honest Danish face bent over him in unaffected concern.

"It is nothing, my little neighbor. Only an old pain that came back for a moment."

"Is it a pain in the chest? I have it some days bad myself. But I have a bottle of patent drops that are very good indeed, and if you will let me"— the little woman eagerly suggested.

"It will soon pass away. Come here, Leon! This is the best remedy." He stooped to the child, and catching him in his arms, swung him once, twice, thrice, so that the small outstretched hands touched the low ceiling, and shrieks of merriment issued from the pouting lips. The woman pursued her task, watching him shyly the while, and noting the sober eyes that belied the forced smile. By the sympathetic instinct of one who had herself suffered and learned to conceal her anguish, she recognized the shallow ruse, but her mind owned no analytical power which would enable her to determine the nature of the pain.

"Very well, if you say so, Mr. King," she reluctantly conceded. "But if you should ever have a pain in the chest, I would be very glad if you would try the drops. For, indeed, it is a big bottle!"— with a parabolic sweep of her left hand to describe the vastness of the measure — "more than I could use in my life. And it is too bad that so good medicine should be thrown away."

She concluded with a deprecatory shrug of her shoulders, and secret complacency. For indeed had she not advanced an adroit argument to dispel any false delicacy her visitor might entertain?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SKIRMISH BEFORE THE BATTLE.

An evening reception in San Francisco is a very gay affair, and lacks none of the essentials of a fashionable party. The latter title has in fact become almost obsolete in the first society. At a reception there is the same display of elegant evening costumes, harmonious or gaudy, decent or *décolleté*, according to the taste and modesty of the wearer; the same commingling of incongruous elements, where purity and vice, refinement and vulgarity, intelligence and ignorance, wit and wealth, meet on a common level. There is the same lavish floral decoration throughout the house, only possible in a land where perpetual summer reigns, and professional florists bring taste and ingenuity into service. Ballinger's string band sounds its enticing strains from a remote balcony; young and old obey its summons and move with varying degrees of agility and grace through the rhythmic measures of the dance, or turn from the heated air of the ball-room, and with people whose minds are cast in a graver mould, wander wherever they elect, finding entertainment in more dignified pastime.

If Miss Thaxter had hitherto drawn her lines a little closer than her neighbors, those favored by

her preference had dismissed the implied comment on their own social latitude with an indulgent smile. The rumor of the flagrant breach of propriety which the evening was to witness had been received with general consternation, provoking hot discussion and stern disapproval, whose acerbity was only tempered by widespread incredulity. San Francisco society, though willing to condone much, did not relish the idea of taking to its bosom an outcast from its own circle, one whom it had petted and caressed, only to be stung in its most vulnerable point — its reputation. Foreign adventurers from strange lands were received without question; but those of its own number, who had fallen by virtue of its very temptations, became pariahs to all the social world.

Margaret Thaxter had been accused of many things: of indolence, a charge to which she had assented without a word; of leading an aimless existence, which she candidly indorsed, claiming herself as the victim of circumstances. She told her friends that she had slipped into a groove when she was a mere child, and that it had grown deeper and narrower as the years advanced, until self-extrication had become an impossibility. Some day her prison walls would fall away and she would be set free, and then she would try her wings, she laughingly assured them.

The allusion needed no explanation, for she occupied a position that was unique. Orphaned in early childhood, up to the age of fourteen she was bred to the simple ways and strict restraint of a New

England farm-house. At that epoch of her life a wealthy uncle, who had emigrated to California in the days of the first gold excitement, and afterward accumulated considerable wealth, prostrated with sickness and believing his end to be near, had dedicated his entire property to the establishment of worthy institutions for the benefit of the public. A prolonged illness and long convalescence awakened in his heart the latent affection for his own kindred, and he sent for his orphan niece to share his home, designing to make ample provision for her future. But so conclusively had he disposed of his estate, so stringent were the conditions to which he had forced his trustees to subscribe, that, when he undertook to conduct his business interests once more, he found himself in the hands of conservators of his own appointment, who considerately allowed him to retain his house and a portion of the income from property that had been his own. But one revenge remained to him, and he determined to exercise it to the utmost extent in his power. Fifteen years had already passed, and Matthew Thaxter was still a hale man, resolved to live to a green old age, in defiance of his waiting beneficiaries.

That Margaret Thaxter should have abandoned the security of her New England home to share the uncertain fortunes and anomalous position of her uncle, had not served to lay her open to the charge of eccentricity. The question of her ultimate destiny was as evident to her friends as it had probably been to her eccentric relative when he had placed her at the head of his household. She would

marry. Marriage is the manifest destiny of all women who are passably good-looking, free from melancholy, healthy, and of a well balanced mind; and Margaret Thaxter possessed all these qualifications, both positive and negative. The volatile influences of life in a gay Western city, engrafted upon a staid and puritanic childhood, had produced a character of singular complexity, and she sometimes appeared enigmatical to her friends.

To the world generally she was simply a beautiful girl with charming manners, who retained her good looks in a remarkable degree, although fast nearing thirty, and she possessed the latitude of action universally conceded to a lovely woman who has held herself unstained by contact with the world. But there were some things not to be brooked by society, even at the hands of Margaret Thaxter.

"I cannot credit it," declared Miss Jennie Sparthorpe, pursing up her red lips, as she fastened a jeweled dagger more securely in her dark hair, and viewed her own reflection in the mirror in the ladies' dressing-room. During the preceding winter Miss Jennie's parents had been foremost in extending social recognition to a young English baronet, who had turned out a swindler, a liar, and a profligate; but the blue blood which coursed through his veins atoned for all his shortcomings.

"It seems incredible, but I am afraid it must be true," sighed a languid blonde, who had been the rage for two seasons, but, having no graces of mind or character to support her charms, was fast retir-

ing to the shades of a sour old maidenhood, as her eyes and complexion faded. "Mrs. McKinehan herself heard her tell him she expected him, in front of the Baldwin Theatre, Saturday night."

"Oh, you're surely mistaken!" chimed in another voice. "It was the Unitarian church. But there comes the General."

There was a little hush of expectancy as Mrs. McKinehan bustled into the room, and allowed herself to be divested of her wraps, disclosing a gorgeous toilet of blue silk and brocaded cardinal velvet, very copious as to train and very meagre as to corsage. This striking costume only served to render more conspicuous a tall, massive figure, with a fleshy neck and a pair of muscular arms. The lady, an acknowledged leader in society, had achieved her prestige less through attractive personal qualities than by the possession of a powerful executive ability — a quality so rare among women that it rendered her an almost indispensable factor in certain emergencies where a clear head and steady purpose outweigh more delicate and womanly qualities.

The same extraordinary gift had served her well in other circles, and she was a recognized power in the church society of which she was a member. Harsh in speech, coarse in manner, habit, and thought, never by any chance committing herself to the utterance of a charitable word, she had, nevertheless, for years held a responsible post on the board of one of the foremost and best endowed charities in the city, a position from which not all

the influence and high standing of her opponents had sufficed to dislodge her. Among certain irreverent young persons she was known by the unfeminine sobriquet of "The General," a title awarded to her for her soldierly mien, her pugnacity, her arbitrary edicts, and her managerial ability.

"Mrs. McKinehan, is it true that Philip King, that awful man who was sent to San Quentin for burglary or highway robbery, is to be here to-night?"

"So I am told." She raised her head with a belligerent snort, and the timid plucked up courage at the sight.

"Is n't it scandalous!"

"Insulting to every invited guest."

"What shall we do?"

"*Sit down on him!*"

As Mrs. McKinehan uttered this didactic sentiment the younger ladies surveyed her portly form with suppressed mirth. If so much avoirdupois were suddenly to be precipitated upon the average society man, his shrift would indeed be short.

"But how, Mrs. McKinehan? It will be so embarrassing! What shall we do?"

"Do?" The General rose to the occasion, settling the stiff folds of her resplendent costume as she spoke. "Refuse to see him; decline introductions; deny acquaintanceship; walk away as he approaches; discountenance all who appear to tolerate him. We have a duty to fulfill to society. If our hostess violates a law of moral ethics, we must show her the mistake she has made."

Forthwith an animated discussion of the line of

battle began, and different suggestions were advanced as to the most decisive and telling manner of expressing their condemnation. No one dissented from the universal sentiment that it must be done. For the sake of example, this quixotic attempt to foist upon society a man who had left it in disgrace must be resisted. Many who were tender-hearted, and would not have had the nerve to precipitate the social verdict, possessed less courage to hold back when stronger natures took the lead. A few were so bold as to openly deplore the necessity, and studied to express their disapproval in some delicate manner that would not offend the sensibilities of their hostess. Others foolishly and inconsequentially revived recollections of the winning traits and virtues that had characterized the lad who had once been so cordially received in their own homes.

The subject of their discussion found an advocate in a quarter least anticipated. A little woman clad in quiet brown silk had entered the room unobserved. Her slight figure was below the medium stature, but nevertheless conveyed the impression of height, the result of a dignified carriage and classical proportions. Her features were delicately chiseled, and a square of costly lace rested like frostwork on her silvered hair, but her dark eyes shone with a steady light, and her gently modulated voice and magnetic manner bespoke her Quaker ancestry.

"Ladies, are you passing judgment on Philip King?"

The General confronted the questioner in evident

confusion. The quiet, forceful little woman before her was the only creature in the city to whom she had ever lowered her crest. Intellectual, delicately bred, a model wife and mother, and a rigid church member, Mrs. Brayton was foremost in all good works, the president of a state benevolent association, and held quiet dominion over the hearts of all with whom she came in contact.

"I am sure you will approve, Mrs. Brayton. Think of the influence upon our own fathers, husbands, brothers, if we give a cordial reception to a returned convict. What will deter any man from committing a crime when he sees a criminal taken to the bosom of society, and feasted like the prodigal son?" The General's voice was almost supplicating in tone.

"Had you thought it over carefully, Mrs. McKinehan? Philip King transgressed the law, it is true, but he refused to palliate his guilt, and bore the penalty bravely. I am inclined to think he is quite as deserving of our recognition to-day as he was twelve years ago; quite as deserving as half of the men here to-night. I have a young son of my own, and I would give more for the example of such a life as Philip King's, to warn him against yielding to the temptations that beset a young man's path, than for those of a dozen of those petted young fellows who have never sinned because they never had the opportunity."

"But the missing money — the fifteen thousand dollars that they were never able to trace. They say there is a shameful story connected with that, if it should ever come to light."

"I don't believe he ever took it. Suspicion is not always certainty. It would go hard with some of our political friends if it were."

This keen shaft of retaliation sped swiftly to its mark and rankled in Mrs. McKinehan's breast, effectually silencing her tongue. A few years before there had been a malfeasance in a public office, and the question of Mr. McKinehan's complicity had never been satisfactorily settled.

Could any one have exercised clairvoyant powers, it would have been a curious pastime to read the minds of the different ladies, as they passed into the broad hall and swept down the stairs. A few frankly rejoiced to find themselves relieved from a disagreeable duty; some missed a delicate flavor of excitement which they had reckoned among the evening's most alluring charms; half a dozen conscientious women revolved the arguments to which they had listened, endeavoring to form an unbiased judgment, while determined not to commit themselves in any way. Those who secretly condemned her attitude dared not place themselves in direct opposition to Mrs. Brayton. She was a woman so rigid in principle and practice, so unsparing in her condemnation of various peccadilloes and frivolities commonly indulged in by society women, that they realized the ridicule to which they would subject themselves by taking a course more exacting than her own, with their incapacity to maintain the standard which consistency would demand. And thus the consciousness of moral infirmity, more potent than many a worthy principle, saved Philip King from a concerted and organized rebuff.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE.

THE evening was well advanced when Philip King, struggling to the last against an almost unconquerable aversion to this attempt to resume his place in the society that had disowned him, passed up the walk leading to the Thaxter mansion. He had his own reasons for preferring to arrive at that late hour. Since the step was to be taken, he reasoned, better to walk up to the cannon's mouth in the thickest of the fray, than to be among the first on the field, and receive a prolonged driblet of small shot and the merciless prods of keen-edged bayonets.

As he approached the door, his progress was arrested by an empty carriage circling around the house in the direction of the rear driveway, after leaving its occupants at the carriage porch.

"Out of the way, d—— you!" shouted the coachman, accosting the new-comer with the easy civility the hireling of wealth instinctively adopts toward a foot-passenger on such occasions.

Courtesy or discourtesy were alike indifferent to the new arrival. He seized the bit of the off horse, bringing the spirited animals to a sudden stand, while he passed on and mounted the steps.

Mechanically he suffered himself to be conducted to a dressing-room, where a servant relieved him of his hat and coat. He took no heed of the loitering guests, who surveyed him with curious scrutiny or indulged in whispered confidences as he approached, but moved silently down the stairs and through an arched doorway, to where the brilliant assemblage flaunted its beauty and its splendor. As he progressed down the brightly lighted rooms the way seemed interminable. He could recall but one other journey that had been so weary and so long — when the prison gates of San Quentin had first closed between him and the joyous world outside, and he had passed down the long open space in the centre of the quadrangle, on his way to the cell to which he had been assigned.

He was like a man under the spell of some painful dream. Every moment it seemed as if the soft carpets must change to hard-trodden earth beneath his feet; in place of the fragrance of flowers would arise the stifling air from five hundred reeking cells, while the low melody of cultured voices, blending with distant music, would be replaced by the echo of sullen tones, muttered curses, and coarse jeers. Shame and despair settled upon him like a dark cloud, and he was conscious of a singular physical weakness, which retarded his footsteps and threatened to overpower him.

He failed to observe the singular hush that fell upon the gay groups as he approached, the startled faces, the significant looks, the involuntary movement that left his path unobstructed. Each instant

he expected to feel the heavy hand of a guard laid roughly on his shoulder, and to hear a harsh voice summoning him back from the realms of imagination to the dreary realities of life.

To those who remembered him in his careless boyhood and early manhood, he appeared like some phantom of his former self, with features and figure essentially the same. Clad in the very garments in which they had been accustomed to see him, he was still so painfully altered that a thrill of pity ran through callous hearts, and the same exclamation sprang to every lip: —

"What a change!"

Changed, indeed! Pale, gaunt, and hollow-eyed, like one rescued from a living tomb; the look of careless gayety gone forever from his face. Thin and haggard, prematurely aged, walking wearily and heavily, his head bowed and his eyes fixed upon vacancy, he drew near the place where the young hostess stood blithely chatting with her guests.

She observed the chill that seemed to have crept over the merry company, and stopped in the midst of a laughing remark to see him slowly advancing toward her, running the gauntlet of curious and scornful eyes, abased, humiliated, hopeless, laboring for breath like one who toils up a steep ascent, borne down with painful memories and self-accusations. Up to that moment she had not realized to what she was subjecting him. Without apology or explanation, she left the gay group and moved swiftly toward him.

In her dress of creamy white, destitute of adornment of any kind; with stately carriage, and the look of high courage in her face, she seemed for the time like some classical impersonation of courage, whose features had exchanged their marble calm for the mobility and sweetness of mortal womanhood.

"Mr. King!"

Her face, her voice, the touch of her hand, recalled his manhood. An indescribable change stole over him. He lifted his head and threw back his shoulders, not with the air of a man who frees himself from a heavy burden, but rather as one who gathers strength to stand erect beneath it. Then he summoned certain empty social platitudes to his aid, and marveled at their vacuous sound as they dropped from his lips. Life had been terribly earnest to him during the last twelve years.

"Uncle, you remember Philip King?"

The quiet elderly gentleman at her side, deep in a question of finance with a friend, turned quickly as she spoke, looking up in keen questioning, as if doubting whether he had understood her aright. Of all the company it was manifest that he was the only one taken by surprise, and Margaret Thaxter could not disguise the suspense in her eyes as she awaited his action. The awkward interval was of short duration. Matthew Thaxter studied the face of the young man for a moment in silence; then, without a word of greeting or of inquiry, he held out his hand.

King passed mechanically through the ceremony

of introduction to those in the immediate vicinity of his hostess, and one of their number, a stranger in the community, engaged him in a lively discussion of a recent congressional measure. The newcomer held his own in the discussion, not without an undercurrent of sardonic humor as he reflected on his own disenfranchised state. By the common law of the civilized world, the discharged felon is forever debarred the right of franchise. Astute statesmanship, that thus holds the lash of degradation ever above the culprit's head!

Although apparently attentive only to his companion's arguments, King did not for a moment lose sight of various movements in his vicinity. Men whom he had known intimately in bygone days turned cold, repellent glances upon him. Women gazed at him with the same shy sense of fascination evoked by one afflicted with a repulsive physical deformity. One dignified elderly lady moved ostentatiously away, in company with her two young daughters. No one showed any inclination to recognize his presence by a friendly word or look.

A gentleman who had been standing at one side, gravely surveying the scene and lost in deep reflection, crossed the room with a firm, even step, and held out his hand to the hostess. There was not one present who did not know the dignified face, crowned with waves of silvery hair. It was Robert Curtis, president of the Bank of Yerba Buena.

"Good evening, Miss Thaxter."

"Must you go?" Her quick perception instantly supplied her with his motive.

"It is imperative. I cannot stay."

She looked up at him in eloquent appeal, but as their eyes met each read a secret the other would fain have concealed. Her hand trembled in his grasp.

"I am very sorry," she said.

"I have no choice."

This summary action, on the part of a gentleman so widely known and respected, bade fair to meet with imitators. Whispered colloquies were held on every side. The sweet flower of human charity, waked into life the instant before, drooped and withered, blighted in its infancy. Noxious sentiments, marshaled by the deadly nightshade of self-righteousness, sprang into rapid growth.

The conversation between King and the eastern gentleman lapsed into desultory observations, then abruptly ceased, and the former was conscious that his new acquaintance eyed him with curious questioning. He would have settled the whole question at once and forever, by taking a summary departure, had it not been for the brave woman who stood near, calm and apparently unmoved, ready to stand her ground and do battle to the bitter end. To thus desert the field in the first heat of the conflict would be to cover her with shame and humiliation; to concede her mistake, acknowledge her defeat.

"Philip King, I am as glad to see you back as I was sorry to see you go."

A small gloved hand was placed in his own, a pair of sincere gray eyes looked him full in the face,

from beneath smooth waves of whitening hair. Mrs. Brayton believed in meeting an issue squarely. She knew no compromise with truth, and her unfaltering recognition of the circumstances of King's past career gave society the cue. Her low, clear voice, in the silence that prevailed, penetrated to distant circles, and all eyes turned instinctively to the young man's face to see if he resented the frank allusion to his crime, but beheld instead an expression of undisguised relief. Various uncomfortable theories and speculations fell to the ground, to the manifest consolation of those who held them, and many commenced to breathe more freely. So there was to be no mincing matters, no glossing over facts. This young fellow, who had forfeited his place in society more than a decade of years gone by, to serve a felon's sentence, did not expect to be fondled and petted, and treated with delicate forbearance. His past, with its unhappy train of wrong-doing and expiation, was to remain an open book. Nothing was to be concealed or ignored.

"Will you come into Miss Thaxter's little print-room, Mr. King, and give us the benefit of your opinion regarding the Rembrandt etchings? I know you have a discriminating taste in such matters."

King made a mental note of the tense of the verb, and thanked the lady in his heart. "You have," not "you had." Hitherto his meagre intercourse with old acquaintances had been a matter of past tenses and resurrected memories, until he had come to feel like a disembodied spirit returning to

the haunts with which it had once been familiar, but where it no longer had right or tenancy, save in the revival of musty recollections. To be, to have, to possess, was to receive recognition as a legitimate element of the present. His self-respect revived at the sound.

The room devoted to engravings and etchings was a small one lying between the conservatory and drawing-room. Large portfolios were scattered about, and on easels and tables were displayed poetical landscapes by Seymour Haden, vigorous specimens of the Whistler school, and a number of rare old prints, among others the Rembrandts whose authenticity was in dispute. So many years had passed during which the young man's artistic tastes had been denied indulgence, that he bent hungrily over the pictures, rejoicing in their beauty, extolling their merits, and pointing out the distinctive traits of the various artists. But a short time elapsed before he found that his impulsive expressions and warm encomiums had drawn about him quite a little audience, and he ceased abruptly as he met the frank looks of pleasure and surprise excited by his remarks.

Along the side of the room next to the conservatory was ranged a series of cases containing sea-ferns and corals, constructed with double fronts of plate-glass, so that the occupants of the two apartments were plainly visible to each other. Chancing to glance in this direction, King caught sight of a familiar face looking fixedly at him through the transparent barrier. He had already trespassed too

long upon the kindness of his warm-hearted friend, and he took advantage of the occasion to excuse himself, and hastened in the direction of the conservatory.

He had never forgotten the loyal friend who had remained faithful throughout the scorching ordeal of his accusation and trial and consequent condemnation, however perversely he had rebelled against his counsels. Dartmoor's confidence in his integrity and his fidelity to his cause, his unselfish advice and unwilling testimony on the witness stand, had produced a deep impression on the erring man. The mysterious deposit that had been provided for his needs at the time of his release, he had at once attributed, with unerring instinct, to his fellow-worker of old, and he had looked anxiously forward to the time when opportunity would be afforded him to express his gratitude.

"Dartmoor, old friend."

"How are you, King? Hope I see you well."

The careless nod, the indifferent tone, discomfited the man who had hastened to him to pour out the fervent sentiments of his soul. Conscious of a peculiar and disagreeable sensation, King checked the speech that was on his lips. Dartmoor gave him one keen look, then moved deliberately away. Perplexed and confused, King found himself groping for the key to the singular mental impression he had received, while a chill suspicion wound its folds about his heart. Then he put the thought resolutely away. Dartmoor was quite justified in passing him by. No credit could result to him from as-

sociation with a returned convict, and he denounced his own thoughtlessness in having endeavored to force himself upon his friend on such a public occasion. His reflections were disturbed by a sharp voice at his elbow.

"Ah, Mr. King! Glad to see you. Will you be kind enough to tell me the name of that tall lady in yellow satin festooned with humming-birds, with the remarkable bunch of trumpet-flowers in her hair?"

King recognized in the questioner a newspaper reporter who had, in a good-humored way, asked him some rather impertinent questions at San Quentin several years before.

"I heard her name a few minutes ago. A Miss Barker, of Cincinnati, I believe."

"Thanks!" And then King perceived that the reporter had a small book in his hand, and was rapidly jotting down notes.

"Business," he said, in response to the other's look of inquiry. "Bodkin, Jones, and I are under orders to get up four columns of toilets before one o'clock. Messenger boys carrying down copy every fifteen minutes."

"I should think the ladies would hardly like that sort of thing," suggested King, politely.

"Like it! My dear fellow, they would be perfectly miserable if they were slighted."

"But surely it must be very distasteful to a woman of dignity or refinement," protested King. "Take Mrs. McKinehan, for instance, or Mrs. Dashbro"—naming two women distinguished for

their piety and pretensions to intellectual superiority.

"Mrs. Dashbro will order fifty copies of to-morrow's paper to send to friends out of town," coolly returned the reporter. "Mrs. McKinehan dropped the city editor a line the day after the big Gardiner reception last spring, desiring him to correct the announcement made in that morning's issue, stating that her dress was of ottoman silk instead of satin-de-lyon, and that the flounces were composed of old point lace, brought from France by her grandmother, the daughter of a third cousin of the Marquis de Lafayette, in the year 1792."

"But Miss Thaxter?" suggested King, and was vexed at himself the next moment for having mentioned her name.

"Miss Thaxter," said the reporter, slowly, "is our despair. Look at her now, as she stands in the door of the drawing-room, chatting with Dartmoor. Well-mated couple, are they not? She is the only perfectly dressed woman in the house, and yet she defies description. There is n't a thing about her toilet that would bear notice in print. Fabric always of some peculiar texture that a man cannot identify for the life of him; quiet and unconspicuous in style, no color to speak of, no gewgaws, no jewelry. It 's my opinion she does it purposely, and I know she only tolerates us out of kindness. I don't mind telling you one curious thing."

He dropped his voice and looked cautiously about.

"I 've never been able to find out her dressmaker," he confided, in sepulchral tones.

"Her dressmaker!"

"Her dressmaker. Don't you know, Mr. King, that three fourths of the costumes described in the newspapers as worn at this or that party by Mrs. or Miss So-and-so are written up before they leave the hands of the dressmakers, and usually with the full consent and approval of the prospective wearers?"

"Really?" His hearer could not help being quietly amused at these revelations.

"Fact! Some of the ladies even go so far as to demand a sight of the proof, and correct and interpolate until the printers go wild. But there is Mrs. Bostwick. She promised to bring me a written description of her own dress, and her daughters'. See you again!" and he was off, note-book in hand.

Left alone, King pondered the scene he had just witnessed in the open doorway. Seen in the light of the reporter's careless remark, Dartmoor's strange behavior received a new interpretation. A well-mated couple, indeed! Equally matched in noble presence, in breeding, intelligence, and nobility of character, what wonder if each should find an affinity in the other? And was it possible that Dartmoor retained some lingering recollection of that youthful attachment, and recognized in him a possible rival? He could have laughed at the thought. Shamed and dishonored, his chance was forfeited. He was no longer on the lists.

He had retired to a sheltered corner, preferring the part of a spectator to becoming an active par-

ticipant in the gay scene before him; but he was not destined to remain long in obscurity. A small woman fluttered down the room, her rose-colored draperies floating airily about her, and two slender hands clutched his arm with passionate emphasis.

"My dear Mr. King!" and then she stopped with a tragical gesture, as if overcome by the power of her emotions.

King met the theatrical demonstration with perfect composure, recognizing in the lady a certain Madame de Vignon, the widow of a wealthy foreigner, and whom he had known in very different circumstances in earlier years. He had observed her standing in his immediate proximity shortly after his arrival, and noted that she had quietly withdrawn, to avoid the necessity of a recognition. Now that the embargo of social proscription was lifted, she had resolved to make up in warmth for the tardiness of her friendly advances.

"You think you have suffered alone all these years," she continued, and her shrill voice attracted the attention of every one near. "What do you suppose we, your friends, have felt?"

Her victim found himself obliged to make some response, and replied that he regretted very much if his friends had experienced any discomfort on his account.

"I want you to take me to a seat, and we will have a nice long talk. There is a vacant chair."

She fluttered off across the room, and King had no alternative but to follow her. The goal of her journey proved to be an S chair situated in a con-

spicuous place in the middle of the apartment. She dropped languidly upon the softly cushioned seat, and motioned to King to take his place on the other side.

"Now tell me all about it!" she commanded, and leaned back in blissful expectancy.

The young man's unfortunate error and its fatal consequences were so much legitimate romance to this ambitious lady.

"But if I have nothing to tell?"

"That is modesty. You know I am dying to hear."

King moved uneasily in his seat. The ingenious contrivance upon which they were seated, although admirably adapted for its original purpose of flirtation, placed a man who was not a lover, and had no desire to pose as one, in a most embarrassing position. Sitting upright, he found his face brought within a few inches of his companion's, as if for the purpose of making a confidential communication. Leaning back, he placed himself in the attitude of a devoted admirer. He tried to strike a non-commital, half-way posture, and gazing around helplessly, saw their hostess approaching, her eyes fixed upon Madame de Vignon with a look of well-simulated anxiety.

"My dear Madame, where have you been? Every one is dying to hear you sing. Will you not be so amiable as to favor us with a song?"

Simpering an apology to King, the small woman arose with alacrity. Miss Thaxter looked back to the deserted swain with mirthful eyes.

"I am so sorry to deprive you of the Madame's companionship, Mr. King, but for the benefit of lovers of music, you must submit."

He had risen as the ladies swept from the room, and wandering through the halls, soon heard a thin soprano voice rise on the air from a neighboring room, and the next moment had some difficulty in maintaining his equilibrium, as a small man darted into the hall, his hands tightly clapped to his ears, and an expression of horror on his face.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he cried, and then he recognized his victim.

A deep mystery had always attached to Matthew Thaxter's actions on the occasion of public gatherings in his own domicile. He was invariably present during the earlier portion of the evening, bland and courteous, as became a hospitable host, but he as invariably disappeared later in the evening, and the most indefatigable search failed to discover his whereabouts or the reason governing his movements. King, unintentionally and unawares, had stumbled across the clew.

"My Lord!" groaned the desperate old man, stopping for a moment in his headlong progress. "Listen to that, will you, King, and tell me why you are not — every man and woman of you — driven insane. And they call it music. Heaven save the mark!" He clapped his hands to his ears again, as the Madame gave a high operatic squeal.

"You may laugh, young man, but when anybody reaches my years, I'll be hanged if he has n't a right to be honest with himself, and not pretend to like

anything for the sake of fashion. I can stand the nonsensical talk and hypocrisy and the indecent dresses, and even the funeral marches that they have substituted for the good old-fashioned dances, but I 'll be hanged if I can stand their vocal gymnastics. Thank goodness, we shall have a rest for a few moments!" he added, as the music ceased and they heard a faint murmur of approval, and a soft clapping of hands.

But the look of quiet sympathy on King's face had passed away, to be succeeded by another thought. Wherever the young man had gone during the evening, he had been conscious that the old gentleman was closely observing his movements, and he had several times encountered him in dark turns of the hall. This constant espionage had become annoying at length, and when his amusement at the old gentleman's tirade subsided, he debated whether the collision was not attributable to some other cause than the one his host assigned.

"Does he think I have designs on his spoons?" he secretly queried, and was on the point of expressing his resentment aloud, when Matthew Thaxter again accosted him.

"By the way, King, have you any particular place where you can be found?" Thaxter asked the question with an indifferent air, but the younger man flushed deeply, as he replied: —

"I have no fixed business at present, Mr. Thaxter."

"But you must live somewhere — eh? or don't you have any fixed place of abode? Drift about wherever it is convenient?"

"I have roomed at Number 23 Lathrop Street for two years past," returned King, cut at the tone of the inquiry. If his interlocutor had any apology to offer for his curiosity it was never heard, for Madame de Vignon, after a proper amount of persuasion and compliment, consented to again exercise her vocal powers for the benefit of the company, and as the first seraphic strains of the new melody burst upon the air, Matthew Thaxter, with one expressive look at his companion, turned and fled up-stairs.

As the guests commenced to move in the direction of the supper-room, Mrs. Brayton kindly relieved King of all embarrassment by claiming his escort. A long table, laden with choice viands and a profusion of superb fruit, occupied the centre of the floor, and the guests were free to gather in whatever order they chose about the small tables which were distributed around the room, and helped to maintain the appearance of informality. A celebrated Kearny Street caterer provided the supper, and his aids, clad in white linen frocks and aprons, moved noiselessly among the guests.

Mrs. Brayton seated herself at one of the little tables, and her cavalier remained standing beside her, attentive to her wants. Several were already seated at the table, who gave the lady a smiling glance of recognition. Casual introductions followed, but names were lost in the universal clatter and chatter.

"Did you ever hear of anything so funny in your life?" appealed King's next neighbor, a girl of

eighteen, just graduated from a fashionable school on Van Ness Avenue. "Miss Thaxter is so original. The idea of presenting such a lion to her guests!"

"Yes?"

A mild interrogation crept unconsciously into his speech, which was all that was needed to draw out the guileless *débutante*.

"A condemned felon! Mamma says she does n't know what to think of it, but I am sure it is simply delicious. So much more interesting than an author or an artist or that sort of thing, you know," carefully dissecting an oyster as she spoke.

"And pray, what did he do?" taking an ungenerous advantage of the situation, it is true, but moved by a conviction that he might as well catch the drift of public sentiment when opportunity afforded.

"Oh, I can't remember, I 'm sure. Killed somebody, or set fire to a house, or something of that kind. I had a glimpse of him as he came in the door. He is a very terrible-looking individual, I assure you. I should have known he was a felon by his eyes. So large and hollow, you know, and full of remorse."

"Thank you — in the name of the felon."

They were rising from the table. The girl raised a pair of startled eyes to his face, then drew back, frightened and disconcerted. Mrs. Brayton, with her quick wit, perceived that something had gone wrong, and took up the conversation.

"When you were a little girl, Bessie Clayton,

you were indebted to Philip King for many a happy hour."

"And why have I not seen him since?" The girl was distressed and mystified. "Have you been away, Mr. King, or — what have I been saying?" She turned, dismayed, from one to the other.

"Nothing but what I shall grow accustomed to hear, Miss Clayton." He smiled reassuringly. "Only you must ask your mother to set you right on one or two small points. I do not want to pose before society in a rôle I cannot sustain," he added, with a quizzical glance. "But there comes your mother now."

He bowed, and would have withdrawn, but Mrs. Brayton laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

Mrs. Clayton stopped only for a word with her daughter. "My dear, the carriage has come, and your father is waiting."

Then she advanced directly to Philip King, and held out her hand. She was a woman so slow of thought and tardy of decision that she often appeared irresolute, but with her mind once made up, she was as stanch as steel.

She had taken his hand in a warm, true clasp, and as she looked long and searchingly into his face, her beautiful eyes filled with tears. Memory brought back the time when she was a young matron, overburdened with family cares, and a pleasant young fellow had romped with her children or enticed them off on brief pleasure excursions, to give the tired mother a chance for rest. She had studied his face during the evening, and her secret

misgivings and half-framed suspicions had vanished as she read its lines of care and pain.

"Some of us owe you a debt, Philip King, and it is time we began discharging it," she said, in her sweet, direct way. "Will you make me very happy by coming to my house, on the old familiar footing, and begin by promising to share our Sunday dinner with us?"

The man looked wistfully at her before replying. She understood the look and averted her eyes. That ghastly gap of years, with its host of miserable recollections! Ah, to blot it out forever, or to fill it up in the good, commonplace way.

"I am afraid I am spoiled for a familiar visitor to any happy household," he replied, and she understood all that he had left unsaid. "But I should like to drop in now and then; it will be a rest."

Margaret Thaxter exchanged farewells with the last of her departing guests, the same winning smile on her lips, the same calm light in her eyes, which had marked her throughout the evening. She replied graciously to their good-natured but stereotyped congratulations upon the social success of the party, discussing with animation the histrionic talent of a famous tragedienne who was about to make her appearance at the Opera House during the week, renewing her promise to attend Mrs. Stafford's tea on Wednesday and Miss Vandemark's tennis party on Saturday, rallying young Mr. Brown upon his ardent championship of a defeated political candidate, and paying a hearty tribute to Mr. Tarantula, the artist, for a weird pastel sketch of

the great crater of Mauna Loa, which he had placed on exhibition at a popular art gallery. When she was at length left alone a change swept over her face, and she turned and went, swift and straight, to the curtained recess beyond the library, where she knew her last guest was awaiting her.

At the sound of her step Philip King arose from the leathern sofa where he had been half reclining. His brow was contracted and his eyes were heavy with thought. He had been going through a careful calculation in the last half-hour, weighing on the one side the open slights, the covert sneers, the honest condemnation, he had encountered from one class, against the faint encouragement, the half unwilling championship, the magnanimous condonement, of others.

His experience had been better and worse than he had expected. Worse, because no power of imagination could ever have brought so forcibly to his mind the contrast between his present position and his old life, or the bitter sense of forfeiture of old-time friendships that had been cherished in his memory. Better, because of the unexpected sweets of compensation in the discovery that a few were ready to overlook the crime so dearly atoned for, and preserved a vestige of their former faith. He had reverted to his quiet, secluded life, monotonous and desolate, it was true, but free from any social wrangles or misapprehensions. If he clung to that he would at least stand on an honest footing with his fellow-men, open to no misunderstandings, no miserable suspicions. Retire or advance? With

a leaden heaviness the scales settled down in favor of retreat.

"Well?"

There was something martial in her appearance. The smile had fled from her lips, and she stood before him with eyes shining and cheeks aflame. Her low voice was like a trumpet call. With a bound the scales were reversed. He answered with a look of grave resolve.

"It is worth trying," he said.

He had risen to go, but she put out her hand to detain him, a singular embarrassment flushing her face and betraying itself in her evasive eyes.

"There is one thing more," she said, and then stopped short.

"Yes? Tell me frankly. Has anything occurred that I ought to know? Surely, you need not hesitate to tell me."

"You know I shall always be anxious and interested. I shall see you from time to time. But you must not come here often. You understand? It would not be best."

He realized perfectly the necessity for this decree, and bowed as if to a sentence of doom. What beside shame and scandal could befall a young and beautiful woman from intimate association with a convict — a man who had spent ten years in close contact with the most degraded of his kind, who was under suspicion in the community, deprived of the rights of the humblest citizen?

He had already told himself that he must not permit this true and fearless friend, who had come

forward in his hour of need, to become sullied by identification with his career. If it sounded differently coming from her lips, it was none the less just and inevitable. But he wished she had trusted to his own sense of what was right and best. Something in his face, as he held out his hand to say good-night, moved her strangely, and it seemed for a moment as if she was on the point of recalling her words. But he tided over her passing embarrassment with an indifferent remark, and left her with a courteous smile.

CHAPTER XV.

A SILENT PARTNER.

In spite of the night's dissipation King rose bright and early the following day, prepared for a masterful struggle with the problems that beset him. He had no definite plan of action, but resolved to make the best of circumstances, and, if necessary, create his own opportunities. His first act was to take his way straight up Fourth Street to the Mining Bureau. The mineralogist sat at his desk, busily engaged in writing, as his visitor entered.

"One moment," he said, without looking up.

He finished his task, and brought the great seal down upon the paper with a quick, decisive touch; then turned to greet the intruder. The next moment he was out of his chair, taking King's hand in a bear-like grip, searching his face with glad, reproachful eyes.

"Oh, you renegade! Such a time as I have had trying to trace you! How dared you treat me so?"

"Accept my apologies, Rutherford. It was rather hard to deprive you of the chance of ruining yourself for my sake, considering all the favors I had already received at your hands," returned King, undismayed by this savage reception.

"But where have you kept yourself, Philip? How has the world been serving you?" anxiously asked his friend.

"To tell the truth, things have been going hard with me, and I did n't want to trouble anybody." King's voice was a little husky, but he cleared it by an effort.

"All the more reason why you should keep in the way, as it were. If I had only known you were in the city and out of employment, I might have given you a chance to go up to Reno last August, in the interest of a mining firm here. It would not have kept you busy more than a month or six weeks, but it might have led to something permanent."

King explained the project that he entertained, and his friend listened with frank interest.

"You want to set up an opposition to me, eh?"

"By no means, Rutherford; but you know as well as I that professional assayers get plenty of patronage, and money, too. Of course people are not always wise to go to them when they can have an impartial official analysis from you free of cost."

"And it is my opinion that right there lies the secret," interrupted the State Mineralogist, laughing. "Our returns are, as you say, perfectly impartial. We speak the truth, and the truth is not always flattering. If you 'll accept a bit of advice from me in advance, Philip, keep some free gold and silver on hand, and salt your specimens before you assay them. Only make handsome returns on

every piece of ore sent in, and you 'll have no end of patronage."

Forthwith the two entered into a practical discussion of ways and means, making an estimate of needed materials and canvassing the best methods of obtaining them. Rutherford offered King the temporary use of appliances from his private laboratory, and expressed great satisfaction in the discovery that the large writing desk in his library at home was a cumbrous article of furniture, much better out of the way, and could easily be dispensed with, along with several cane-bottom chairs. King met his generous offer with cordial acceptance. The backbone of his pride was broken, and he determined to let no false scruples stand in the way of his prosperity. One question alone threatened to retard the realization of their plans.

"It is absolutely essential that you should have a central location," asserted the elder man. "Rents are fearfully high down town, and you will not be safe without having a sufficient sum on hand to meet the first quarter's expenses. Can't you devise some way of raising it, King?" he asked, in genuine anxiety.

"Not unless I draw on my fifteen thousand reserve fund."

It augured well that King could jest on this sore subject, and his friend laughed, a mellow laugh that came from the depths of a happy heart.

"Never mind, Rutherford, I 'll have it yet," declared his visitor, reassuringly. "It may take time. I dare say it will; and I shall have to put off enter-

ing upon my new profession until I have accumulated it. But I can feel that I have a definite object in view, and it is worth working for."

Before parting the two men had a frank discussion of certain personal matters they had hitherto avoided.

"There 's no use denying, King, that you constitute, in a sense, a moral problem. It is hard to define your exact status in society," said his friend, thoughtfully.

"Suppose I work it out myself."

"The only way in which the question can ever reach a satisfactory solution," returned John Rutherford. "At present you are a questionable quantity, a dangerous element. Do you know why I have never asked you to my house — much as I've wanted you to come?" he added, seriously.

"Your children?" King was not disposed to mince matters.

"My boy. He is just at the blood-and-thunder age when a man must go through a thrilling experience to acquire interest in his eyes. He has not learned to appreciate the virtue and beauty of a humdrum, honest life, and he would at once pounce upon you as a model hero, and perhaps strive to ape your example — who knows? Just now you are in an embryotic stage, a period of transition. There would be positively no limit to the dashing career my son's imagination would map out for you. It 's a great pity you are not an out-and-out villain, King, for then you could be held up to youth as a warning and example. If either you or my son

were five years older I should be happy to have you meet. Five years will put some sense and logic into his rattle-brained head; five years will see you restored to a commonplace, prosaic existence."

"God grant!" said King, fervently.

The mineralogist accompanied his visitor to the door, and as they halted on the threshold he added, with deep feeling, —

"I am glad you feel as you do about one thing, King. Thousands of men before you have committed crimes and served the legal penalty, and live to-day respected members of communities where no suspicion of their past has followed them. It seems braver to face it out at home. And I like that notion of yours about redeeming your name. So long as the world exists, men will sin and suffer, and find themselves cast adrift in life, without compass or rudder. Your example will be a help."

King walked back to his lodging-house in a thoughtful mood, pondering various schemes for the successful consummation of his object. He found a visitor awaiting him in the little reception-room on the first floor, a man who paced up and down the floor, observing with curious interest the threadbare furniture, the faded carpets, the shabby curtains, and other evidences of poverty and decay. He turned around as he heard the outer door open and close, and King recognized the shrewd face and stooping figure of Matthew Thaxter.

"Good morning, Philip! A fine time I've had of it, hunting up your place! No doubt you think it is a brilliant proceeding to locate yourself in this

out-of-the-way place. I suppose young fellows of your own age enjoy climbing these interminable steps, but it 's death and destruction to old bones like mine."

He delivered this complaint in a fretful tone, and with a resentful air, but the look he bent on the young man was one of cunning observance.

"I 'm very sorry, Mr. Thaxter, but I am not accustomed to receiving visitors; and in selecting my lodging-place I considered neither old bones nor young ones."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man, testily. "Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what you did consider — a picturesque view, for instance, or the retirement of the place?"

"Neither. I was governed by questions of economy alone."

"Humph!" The old man's ejaculation was strictly non-committal, and King was in doubt as to whether his reply met his visitor's approval or incurred his displeasure.

"You 're wondering why I have made you such an untimely call," continued his eccentric guest. "I 'm wondering why you don't ask me into your own quarters. Perhaps you call it hospitality to receive a friend in a lodging-house parlor."

"I beg your pardon," said King, the blood rushing into his pale face in his embarrassment. "The fact is, I have only one room, and that is scarcely presentable enough to exhibit to a guest."

"All the better. I like best to see people and houses without their company manners — when

they are off parade. Go ahead. Up another flight of stairs, no doubt."

Inwardly rebellious, King led the way to his room in the second story. Grumbling and scolding, but glancing about him with quick, bright eyes, that took in the most minute detail of drugget-covered floor, bare walls, and scarred woodwork, Matthew Thaxter followed; nor did he fail to observe that King had left his door unlocked — a fact from which the little man drew his own conclusions.

King threw the door open, and invited his guest to enter. So many years had passed since he had been called upon to exercise his hospitality, it was with a sense of awkwardness as foreign as it was unpleasant that he endeavored to show his visitor that he was welcome, and offered him the low rocker by the window. But Matthew Thaxter seemed to neither hear nor heed his courtesy. He stood silently gazing about the small room, noting the bare floor, the old fashioned paper on the wall, the furniture, of a style long out of date, whose disfigured surface and chipped edges were mute witnesses of a boy's restless pranks. He saw all the little makeshifts for comfort and convenience. He saw more than the occupant himself perceived or meant that another eye should read; for the room had a story of its own to tell, and it told it eloquently to eyes that interpreted its language. Whatever the result of the visitor's meditations, they bore fruit only in another harsh suggestion.

"Where 's your manners, Philip King? Don't

you know it 's lunch time? Can't you treat a man to a cup of coffee or a glass of wine? I 'll warrant you have some savory morsel tucked away around here." And he eyed the young man with eager expectancy.

For answer, King went to the closet and took from an upper shelf a common Delft plate, on which lay three or four soda-crackers and a bunch of Muscat grapes. These, with a glass of water, he quietly offered to his visitor.

Matthew Thaxter took a seat and addressed himself to the task of disposing of this sumptuous repast, with an air of unfeigned enjoyment. King watched the disappearance of the simple provision he had made for his noonday meal with a singular sensation, doubtful whether to be most amused or annoyed.

"How long have you been here, Philip?" The old man had finished munching the last cracker, and, notwithstanding his evident enjoyment of the repast, there was a new and querulous tone in his voice.

"Two years this coming week."

Matthew Thaxter stripped the last of the luscious grapes from the stem, and then gave utterance to a laconic comment.

"I like it!" He uttered the words with savage intensity.

"What? Oh, the fruit. Yes, the Muscat is a very fair grape."

"Fiddlesticks! I like this — the whole thing."

He rapped with his cane on the bare floor as he

spoke, and waved it about the poorly furnished apartment, as if to emphasize and point his assertion.

"I like it," he soberly reaffirmed. "It means, Philip King, that you have struggled on like an honest man."

King had followed his own course so long, without approval or recognition, that he could find no words to reply to this unexpected commendation. The old man reseated himself in the low chair, and reflected gravely before he spoke again.

"Perhaps you think, King, that I am an infernal meddler; but the truth is, I came around to see you about a matter of business. I should n't have dragged my old bones up here at such an early hour for social pleasure alone." The quizzical smile with which he uttered the last words betrayed the hypocrisy of his grumblings a few minutes previous. "Margaret tells me that you are intending to open an assay office."

King chafed a little at this announcement. He had declared that he would perish rather than take help from a woman, and she had attempted to circumvent him by sending her uncle as proxy. He could only trust himself to nod a meek assent.

"Very well, my boy; I want you to take me into partnership with you."

King was electrified at this proposition.

"But it is only a visionary scheme yet," he protested. "I have n't the least idea in the world how I shall put it into practice. My success is altogether problematical. There may not be any profit; there will certainly be expense."

"All the better, my friend. I like risks. Ever since those rascals took my property away from me fifteen years ago, and made me a pensioner on my own bounty, I have been vegetating, morally and mentally. It will be a positive godsend to me to have some active business interest, and if I could only make a handsome pile again, and have the scamps in sackcloth and ashes over the advantage they took of me and the shekels they might have gained by waiting, I should be a happy man. I don't propose to lay you under any obligations that you cannot repay. I go into the business to make money, and shall insist upon having papers drawn in the most binding form. If you attempt to take any advantage of me, my lad, you'll find me a regular Shylock. Come, man; don't be all day considering. Are you going to take me in, or must I look elsewhere for a partner?"

Beneath his light words lurked a serious purpose and a tremulous eagerness that King found it impossible to resist.

"I don't think I can refuse," he said, frankly, "providing your conditions are stringent enough."

"You shall hear them now. My guardians still allow me some liberties with my own property. In my building on the corner of Pine and Sansome streets there is a vacant suite of offices, and a small sunny room across the hall, that will answer for a workshop. I will put in the offices, furnish one of the rooms, and undertake to meet the running expenses. I don't mind binding myself to do a little office work now and then. You may stock your

laboratory, put in all your work and time, fit up your own office, and provide the brains of the concern. I shall claim one third of the profits. Are you satisfied?"

"I am satisfied that you are making a very generous offer, and that I should be a churl to refuse it. The only revenge left open to me is to build up such a business that you will profit by the venture, after all."

By Matthew Thaxter's invitation, King accompanied him down town to take a look at the premises and advise regarding needful improvements. The young man had drawn back at the first suggestion, but as he encountered the kindly, questioning glance of the elder man, his scruples vanished, and he assented without a word. It was a new and pleasurable sensation to tread the streets with head erect, arm in arm with a man respected throughout the city for his upright and honorable character, receiving now and then a friendly smile or doubtful, hesitating mark of recognition.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LION WHO WOULD NOT ROAR.

As King opened the door of his office one morning he perceived a small envelope lying upon the floor, where the carrier had dropped it on his early round. The assayer had so little correspondence, and personal letters were such a rarity in his experience, that he examined the superscription with some curiosity, noting the creamy delicacy of the paper, and the tiny gilt crest in the upper left hand corner. The note contained an invitation to dinner, written in very bad French and a woman's slanting hand: —

A Monsieur. Monsieur Philippe King — Cher ami: Votre image s'est presente continuellement a moi depuis que ji vous ai rencontre l'autre soir. Vous etes si change depuis le temps avant votre malheur.

Rapprochez vous de moi. Permettez a vos amis d'exercer encore un influent filiciteux sur votre vie. Venez diner avec moi jeudi prochain a six heures du soir. Vous ne rencontrerez que deux ou trois amis intimes, et cela vous fera bon. Votre amie toute devouee.

AMELIE DE VIGNON.

He smiled at the name which appeared at the foot of the page, remembering the lady's demonstrative greeting on the night of the reception, and

as he dwelt upon the small woman with her air of elegant patronage, he recalled the little schoolmistress who, twenty years before, in shabby gown, besought the favor of the moneyed parents of the neighborhood. But Amelia Grigsby had been a shrewd as well as an ambitious woman, and during the Comstock excitement in the sixties she had by some shadowy means contrived to gain the confidence of one of the manipulators of the market. Staking her little all on the result, she had been lifted from poverty to affluence within the brief space of six short months. Years of foreign travel followed, in the course of which she had captured a husband of distinguished family, who, after a short married life of questionable felicity, had the good grace to die, leaving her in undisturbed possession of her wealth, and with the dower of his name. Returning to San Francisco, with the prestige acquired by foreign travel and an acquaintance of some distinction abroad, she had established herself in a showy mansion on a fashionable street. Realizing her impotence to cope with other women on their own grounds for social prowess, she had bravely sought to inaugurate an aristocracy of mind and culture, an enterprise which would have been most commendable were it not that it had for its ruling motive the aggrandizement of Madame de Vignon.

King smiled as he reflected upon these things, but his face grew sober as he pondered the wisdom of accepting the invitation. By doing so he would be irrevocably committing himself to the flood tide

of criticism and comment which would ensue when it became generally understood that his reappearance in society was not the result of a careless freak or hasty impulse, but part of a deliberate line of action. He had not yet drifted so far into the social maelstrom that he could not put about for shore and beat a precipitate retreat. But Margaret Thaxter's injunction recurred to him, —

"I do not need to tell you not to push your way anywhere. You will never do that. But do not slight the little attentions offered in honesty and sincerity."

With all her affectations and her narrow ambitions, he believed little Madame de Vignon to be true-hearted and sincere. He had never regarded her as precisely a lady, for every man instinctively measures the women he meets by his own mother's standard, and King had been taught from boyhood that modesty and delicacy were essential attributes of a true lady. Still, he recognized the kindly feeling that prompted the attention, and understood, too, that it required some courage for any woman, however self-sufficient or independent, to offer a returned convict the countenance of her hospitality. King had not forgotten his French, but he responded to the invitation in the simplest English, thanking the writer for her courtesy and accepting the invitation, and on the day named crossed the city and stepped aboard a cable car which bore him to his destination.

To one acquainted with the pronounced tastes of the hostess, the house was easily recognizable by

its peculiar style of architecture — distinguishable from its neighbors even in the semi-twilight which had settled over the city. In his ambition to eschew hackneyed styles, the man who drew the plans had achieved a modishness more puerile than that characterized by the use of simple classic forms.

A row of gayly tinted Chinese lanterns hung above the door — a pretty local custom for marking a house where unusual festivities were taking place.

The hostess was a woman thorough yet superficial in her mental training, for all her polish and intelligence had been acquired for the purpose of outward display alone, originating in no hidden cravings of her nature. This peculiarity of character was asserted throughout the house. The pictures upon the walls, the sculptured figures appearing in snowy relief against dark maroon hangings, the books distributed about the tables or standing on dress parade in low book-cases, the delicate porcelains upon the plush-covered chimney-breast — were all arranged to catch and please the eye of the observer. Nothing had dropped into its place because it happened so, or in obedience to any principle of harmonious adaptation. From obscure recesses or far-away corners the rooms presented a blank perspective. All had been measured and set with rod and rule. It was a house with no hidden stores of comfort, no retired nooks, no concealed resources; so destitute of all that savored of genuine cheer or spontaneous beauty that one might well fancy it had been modeled after its mistress's heart.

As the servant held the portière aside for the visitor to enter, and King gazed into the symmetrical apartment where the hostess received her guests, he was seized with a confused notion that he had somehow stumbled into the wrong house. Was this the vivacious lady whose gay plumage had dazzled his eyes a week or so before — this demure creature, clad in Quaker gray, with a white mull kerchief crossed upon her breast? Had he possessed a more intimate acquaintance with the vagaries of the Madame's later career, he would have been aware that life with her had become a spectacular play, rejoicing in swift movement and transition.

His doubts were speedily set at rest. The eyes of the hostess brightened as she heard the announcement of the latest arrival. Along with a very laudable purpose to become a factor in King's social regeneration, she was possessed with a lively desire to distinguish her little social gathering by the presence of the man whose name was on every tongue. Madame de Vignon was very fond of lionizing people, after her own peculiar fashion, and skillfully ensnared many travelers of repute, who went to her house with the anticipation of finding congenial and agreeable acquaintances among the intelligent company habitually gathered there, only to be placed in such rigid leading strings by the vivacious little schoolmistress, as to bear away with them an uncomfortable conviction that they had been put on parade for the benefit of their entertainer. The lion market had been scarce and de-

mand brisk that winter. Had it not been for a young Englishman of fine old family, and heir presumptive to a noble title, the glory of the lady's soirées would have waned early in the season. This young man was a very tractable and admirable type of the British lion, who tossed his mane and did duty with all the dignity of his aristocratic lineage upon occasion, or subsided into inoffensive minority when a superior planet was in the ascendency.

Madame de Vignon pressed King's hand with impressive cordiality, detaining him for a brief confidential chat before she presented him to her friends. As she neared the corner where the Englishman lounged, absorbed in conversation with a lady guest, she gathered herself for a master stroke. In a superficial way the little woman was something of a philosopher, and she rejoiced to be the one to bring together these two opposing types — the one the noble product of a conservative civilization, the other a forcible and eloquent example of the fluctuations of life in a new land.

"Miss Thaxter, we have the pleasure of welcoming our mutual friend, Mr. King, to our little gathering to-night;" and with this act of self-assertion the hostess complacently felt that she had divided honors, and made good her claim of proprietorship in the hero of the hour.

"Mr. Endicott," she proceeded, "I want to make you acquainted with Mr. King. He is a man with a most interesting history. Mr. King, my young friend Mr. Endicott."

Why this Englishman should be habitually called

young Endicott was not wholly clear to those who found it impossible to refer to him by any other title, for he was a man past thirty, with a stalwart form and pleasant, brown-bearded face. Probably it was because he possessed in a marked degree the candor of speech, vigor of mind, and warmth of heart peculiar to early British manhood.

The two men shook hands and stared at each other uncomfortably. Contrary to every tradition of social usage, the Englishman was the one to break the ice.

"Ah! Happy to hear it, I 'm sure, Mr. King. Traveling, hunting, and that sort of thing? I 'm awfully fond of adventure."

Margaret Thaxter shot one swift glance of stern rebuke at the demure little woman by her side, then came to the rescue.

"Mr. King does not fight savages or wild beasts, Mr. Endicott, or run a race with time by sea or rail. The enemies with which he has to contend are human skepticism and prejudice. His journey is to distance an error in the past."

She spoke so bravely and cheerily and yet with such decision, that the Englishman could do no less than yield a bewildered assent, and follow her cue when she led the conversation into another channel.

Madame de Vignon was foiled for the time, but she was by no means resigned to forego her purpose. The company proceeded to the dining-room, a very pretentious apartment finished with dark woods, and hung with paintings of game and fruit

of questionable artistic merit, but indicating most creditable forethought and mathematical skill in the precision with which they had been fitted into the panels of the wall. As one course succeeded another in imposing procession, and they came at last to a leisurely discussion of dessert, the lady availed herself of a momentary lull in the conversation to lean a little forward and address King, who occupied a seat several removes away and near the centre of the table. Her voice and words contained a timid suggestion and appeal.

"Mr. King, have you ever thought of turning your attention to literature?"

"Never, Madame."

"Ah!" She gave a little sigh, and toyed with a bunch of ruddy Tokay grapes; then sat erect and smiled brightly, as if seized with a sudden idea.

"Then the thought is an inspiration, and you must accept it as a call. I am sure you would distinguish yourself, Mr. King."

She uttered the last words so dreamily and innocently that King was betrayed into the indiscretion of a reply.

"The profession is so overcrowded nowadays that one must needs have very serious provocation to justify him in entering the lists, Madame de Vignon."

The Madame's eyes snapped in wicked triumph. The young man's unguarded reply gave her the desired opportunity to prolong the conversation.

"That is what I always say, Mr. King. One

must live intensely, must become a part of a philosophy, as it were, before he can promulgate it successfully. Take the case of Henry George, for instance. Who among us would ever have believed that insignificant-looking little man could become one of the great reformers of the day! His success has been solely due to the fact that the principles of which he treats were warring elements in the arena of his own individual life. He learned to recognize the needs of the multitude from the privations he bore. He generalized from his own personal experience."

She made an impressive pause, and King remarked, somewhat wearily, that the romance and the beauty of vital social problems were sometimes wholly eliminated by living in too close quarters with them — an expression of opinion seconded by another guest, who related a humorous episode of a noted philosopher's domestic life at the time that he was wrestling with a great literary work. But the Madame clung tenaciously to the thread of her argument.

"Harry George has made a great success in a field in which there are almost numberless competitors. You, Mr. King, have a new and comparatively untrodden field" —

She was interrupted by a suppressed cry at the opposite end of the table. Margaret Thaxter, in peeling an orange, had allowed the fruit-knife to slip, cutting her finger nearly to the bone.

"I beg your pardon, Madame de Vignon. It was so very awkward — so inexcusable in me!"

She wound her lace handkerchief tightly around her finger as she spoke, obstinately rejecting all offers of assistance, as if determined to dismiss the luckless accident from the minds of the company. "And just as you were talking so eloquently of poor Harry George! Mr. Endicott, I insist upon your telling us, here and now, what horrid prejudice you English have conceived against the innocent citizens of this State, that you imprison them upon the slightest pretext, when quietly traveling through your domains. What had poor Mr. McSweeny done, for instance, to justify you in shutting him up in your horrid Irish prisons, driving his unhappy wife and children distracted, for fear he would be shot without trial?"

Who shall say that Englishmen are not quick-witted? Endicott took the cue at once. For some reason Miss Thaxter wished to change the conversation. The accident with the knife had been a deliberate stratagem to accomplish her purpose. He paid a secret tribute to her courage and her pluck as he chivalrously responded to her challenge, upholding her standard in an unknown cause.

There are three ways in which the king of beasts can be effectively displayed, when one has had the good fortune to capture him, and to have him safely caged within the walls of their own domicile, and yearn to acquaint their friends with his prowess. They can single out his points of vantage, measure his proportions before admiring eyes, remark upon his mighty sinews, his wondrous girth of limb, his majestic stride, the tawny color of his mane, the

savagery of his eye, and altogether persuade spectators that he is in color, stature, and native ferocity the most rapacious representative of the feline race that ever trod the softly carpeted floor of a lady's drawing-room.

Better still, if the amateur showman possess sufficient art and cunning, to tame the monster and render him subservient to the eye and touch, lead him hither and thither before a circle of awed beholders, and demonstrate that he has quite discarded his savage and bloodthirsty attributes; that under skillful training he has forsworn his ferocious qualities; that he is the best schooled lion, the most amiable and tractable of beasts, that ever forsook his native wilds to dwell amid the haunts of civilized men.

Failing in these endeavors, which are gentle methods, and by their artlessness and humanity commend themselves to feminine tuft-hunters, there is but one recourse remaining; for it is safe to assume that any one possessed of sufficient enterprise to secure such a fascinating monster must be of too ambitious and high-spirited a mettle to permit the distinguished guest to depart without some assertion of his leonine nature, lest the more astute of the company should deride his pretensions, and fancy they detect asinine ears peeping from beneath the tawny hide. There is, therefore, but one recourse left. Let the brave keeper be provided with a sharp weapon of finest tempered metal. The keen-edged lance of satire is excellent, but it cannot compare with the venomous rapier of obtru-

sive sympathy, the glitter of whose keen blade is veiled beneath the misty breath of gentle speech and tender condolence, until it sheathes its point in the breast and stabs to the heart. Under such treatment the average lion will toss his mane and lash his tail, and roar so loudly as to dispel the last lingering doubts as to his identity.

Madame de Vignon had vainly resorted to the first-named artifices, and, like the intrepid little woman that she was, she resolved to make the lion roar.

She went about her enterprise so delicately, and with such sweet unconsciousness, that her victim's suspicions were disarmed, and he offered himself a willing sacrifice.

They had returned to the drawing-room, and strolled idly about, as people will whose limbs are stiff and cramped with long maintenance of a sitting posture. The hostess availed herself of King's arm, and, when they had made the tour of the apartment, paused, by chance or design, where a group of people were discussing two dainty tanagras — choice specimens of antique sculpture, rifled from the tombs of the ancient Greeks.

"But how did you ever manage to obtain them, Madame?" exclaimed a spectacled young gentleman, professor of the dead languages in a suburban college, who was curiously examining one of the small figures, and looked up at the lady's approach. "I was under the impression that the Grecian government had laid a strict embargo upon the export of all such relics."

"It would be a very long story to tell, and perhaps not exactly a safe one;" and the lady looked around with a shrug of affected fear. "I do not mind confessing that I had a sorry time of it getting them out of the country. I did not dare pack them in my trunk, for fear of being apprehended by the customs authorities. But there was an English ship in port, and the captain was quite willing to swell his coffers by a private speculation." She rounded her communication with a mysterious nod.

"I am sorry you were not apprehended, Madame de Vignon. Think of the lustre it would have conferred upon our nation — fabled to be so apathetic in all matters relating to the fine arts, and at this moment derided by all foreign nations for the prohibitive tariff imposed by Congress upon the importation of works of art — to have one of our countrywomen under arrest for attempting to smuggle contraband works of sculpture across the Grecian frontier, with a gallant officer of Her Majesty's navy in the background as an accomplice!" exclaimed another of the group.

"It is all very well to make light of it; but I assure you there is nothing comical in the dreadful conviction that you have laid yourself liable to the law. I cannot tell you the pangs of conscience that I have suffered. I have walked the floor by hours; I have passed sleepless nights; I have lost flesh; I have been afraid to look my neighbor in the face. But I have learned to feel a tender compassion for others who have been tempted and fallen. Tell me, Mr. King," — her voice was plain-

tive and wistful, — "tell me, have I shared the common experience of all law-breakers?"

"I regret that I cannot enlighten you, Madame. I do not think that people who have been in the thick of a moral conflict ever stop to gauge their emotions by a quarter-inch scale."

He drew out his watch and consulted it.

"I have a business engagement at half-past eight. You will excuse me, Madame de Vignon."

Bowing quietly, he retired from the room. In the hall he encountered Margaret Thaxter, who had stolen through a rear door, unperceived.

"You do not mind? You will not give up?"

"Rest assured I will not."

"Mr. King, what is the meaning of this letter the prison authorities have received from Guatemala, exonerating you from the charge of attempting to procure an unlawful release? Who is this man Burke, and what interest has he in the matter?"

"There is nothing interesting in the story," he replied, evasively. "It is merely an explanation of an old mystery. But you cut your hand at the table, did you not? Let me see it. Is it badly hurt? How did it happen?" he questioned, seeing the web of lace still wound tightly about her finger.

She hastily concealed the hand in the folds of her dress, and met his honest concern with a slow smile that puzzled and perplexed him.

"It is a mere scratch, and not of the least importance in the world," she said.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

KING was seated in his private office one day, absorbed in the examination of a specimen of tin ore brought in by an Arizona prospector, when he heard an uncertain step in the hall outside, and a timid knock on the door, followed by an awkward turn of the heavy bronze knob, and the appearance of a man's form on the shadowy threshold.

"Come in."

The shy, irresolute attitude, the involuntary shrinking at the sound of a human voice, told their own story to the man whose sense of sympathy had been quickened in the hard school of experience. He, too, had known what it was to come back to take his place among his fellow-men once more, unwelcome and unsought.

"Have a seat, Ellis. It 's out for good, is n't it?"

"For good or ill, Mr. King; I can't say. When a man has been shut up as long as I have, it 's an open question whether it would n't be a mercy never to give him his liberty. To tell you the truth, King, I don't know what to do with it. No friends, no standing, no money! I almost wish I was back in San Quentin."

"How long has it been, Ellis?"

"Sixteen years. Sent up for twenty, you know, and if I had n't lost any credits my time would have been out nearly two years ago. But several years ago I came across one of the turnkeys abusing a ten-year-old lad sent up from Los Angeles County for burglary. He was just the age of my boy, King, and there was a look about his eyes like him. I knocked the brute over, and it wiped out my credits. I don't know that I care. I 'm sure I 'd do it again if I had to pay the same price."

"Ellis, I beg your pardon, but do you know you are one of the last men I should ever deem capable of taking the life of a fellow-man."

"Before God, King, I would have killed myself first. He was my best friend, man. Whiskey did it. I could never recollect a thing between the time we left the saloon on Second Street and the hour I found myself in a cell in the city prison, under the charge of murder. I did it; no doubt of that. They proved it clearly enough for even my satisfaction."

The two men sat on in silence for some minutes, one thinking bitterly of the mad act that had wrecked his life, the other casting about in his mind for some means of helping a friend in the hour of his extremity.

"Let me see, what was your trade, Ellis? Something connected with machinery?"

"Iron-moulder."

"Think you could take it up again without any trouble?"

"It is n't the kind of a trade one is likely to forget."

"Keep up courage, man. It may be I can help you. I 've been dabbling in machinery a little myself, of late, an improvement on the hoisting works in mining shafts, that I hope will save the lives of some poor fellows. A man who has his down-town office on this floor has taken hold of it — Murphy, owner of the large foundry on Beale Street."

"A. J. Murphy?"

"That 's the man. Did you ever know him, Ellis?"

"Know him! He was my brother-in-law. He took the children when my wife died. It 's no use, King; he 's a hard man. He 'll never turn his finger over to help me. If you will believe me, he has never let the boy or girl come to see me, or send a word of remembrance."

"Ellis, is your boy a tall, slim fellow, with bright brown eyes and dark hair, an inch or so taller than you?" King began in suppressed excitement, remembering a lad he had frequently encountered in Murphy's office.

"Lord, King! how should I know? He was five years old when I saw him last, a chubby-faced little rogue, with yellow curls and a comical lisp. And little Annie — I have never forgotten her baby face as she cuddled it up to mine that last night." The unhappy father could not suppress a groan.

"Ellis, wait here a moment. Brace up, old fellow. A man needs all his strength and courage at such a time."

A few minutes passed by and King reëntered the room with a stout, prosperous, middle-aged man. A stormy scene ensued. The foundryman denounced his miserable relative in the most bitter terms, reproaching him for the disgrace he had brought upon his family, and sternly refused to have anything to do with him in the future. Ellis bore his abuse with an air of hopeless resignation. As he concluded, Murphy turned to King with an apologetic air.

"I regret, Mr. King, that you have been a witness to this painful interview. But I tell you, sir, that you and every other man in the community make a mistake when you undertake to shelter such fellows beneath your own good name and standing. There is n't a spark of hope for a man who has once fallen so low. Place no faith in the professions of discharged convicts."

Ellis was in the act of leaving the room, to put an end to the discussion, but King motioned to him to remain. The assayer's face was colorless and agitated by suppressed emotion, but his eyes were brave and fearless.

"Consider the matter well, Mr. Murphy. Suppose you or I had committed a crime in a moment of excitement or temptation."

The foundryman scoffed at the suggestion.

"You are too practical a man to repeat such cant, Mr. King. The Biblical story of the prodigal son is very pretty in its place, but it won't apply to these times. The prodigals nowadays come back and plunder their friends."

"Then, sir, you must include me in your category. I left San Quentin just two years and a half ago, after serving a felon's sentence."

The prosaic man of business stared at the one who had been his neighbor and daily associate for six months back, and tried in vain to reconcile his knowledge of the man with the proclamation that had issued from his lips. His effort was a signal failure.

"I can't believe it, King," he protested. "You a convict! How is it I never knew?" There was a touch of injured feeling in his last words.

"I have never attempted to conceal it, Mr. Murphy," King replied, with dignity. "Honestly, I am sorry to learn that you did not know, for I placed added value on your friendship because I thought you were deliberately aiding the struggles of a fallen man. I assure you, sir, that if a man once loses his standing through the commission of a criminal deed, he has fearful odds to contend with when he undertakes to regain it."

The foundryman stood with his arms folded, and a preoccupied look on his face.

"James," he said, gruffly, to the convict, "do you want a place at your old work, at the old wages?"

"If you would only try me!"

Murphy eyed him sharply. The supplicating tone and look disposed of a suspicion he had entertained that his disreputable relative might have returned to play the part of a parasite upon one who was reaping the result of years of honest toil.

"Call around at the works to-morrow morning, and I will see that the foreman gives you a place."

Ellis received the announcement calmly, for a deeper sentiment was struggling for expression.

"Andrew," he said, haltingly, "the children — where are they?"

A shadow of vexation crossed Murphy's face. He had anticipated the inquiry.

"They are alive and well. Their home is at my house, as it has always been since Mary's death."

"Am I never to see them again?"

"Judge for yourself, James, and if you have any latent manliness, let it be shown in their behalf. They have grown up happy and respected, believing themselves fatherless as well as motherless. No knowledge of the miserable disgrace your act brought upon the family has ever troubled them. The boy is a proud fellow. Do you want to break in upon their happy lives with the wretched tale we have tried so hard to spare them, and claim their recognition — you!"

They waited silently for the convict's reply. In his face they beheld evidences of the struggle taking place within him, but his better self conquered.

"So help me God! I'll never trouble them."

When King was at length left alone he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his desk, and buried his face in his hands. Every line of his figure, his long-drawn breath, his pallid face, were expressive of intense weariness; but it was the weariness of victory, not of defeat. As he finally rose to his feet and resumed the work in which he had been interrupted, his face was calm and tranquil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROGRESS.

If the revelation made on the occasion of the meeting in King's office in any way affected the confidence Murphy had hitherto reposed in his neighbor, he never betrayed it by word or sign. He met him daily with the same hearty salutation, while their business relations remained uninterrupted. The subject of Ellis's life, in its bearing upon the past or future, was never alluded to between them.

Young Tom Ellis seemed to have conceived a strong liking for the assayer, and, much to the surprise of the latter, Murphy placed no obstacles in the way of their growing friendship, but appeared to give it his tacit approval. The young fellow was bright and progressive, with a fondness for scientific matters that manifestly overruled his commercial tastes; but he contented himself with liberal indulgence in scientific reading, occasional attendance at public lectures, and the stray tidbits of information picked up in intercourse with his new-found friend.

To insure himself against a painful scene with the nephew, akin in character to that which had jarred upon his association with the uncle, King

seized upon the first opportune moment to make the lad acquainted with the circumstances of his past life. Tom Ellis was better informed than Murphy had been. He shifted uneasily in his chair while King commenced the relation of his story, then interrupted him with an awkward assurance.

"Excuse me for saying so, Mr. King, but I 've known it all along. The fellows are always ready to discuss such things, you know."

It was not plain to the older man what effect the knowledge had produced upon the young man's mind, but he was not long to remain in doubt.

"I 'm glad you spoke of it, for one thing;" and the boy glanced up with a shy look, as if to gather courage to go on. "I 'm not a prig, and I want to tell you, Mr. King, what I think such an example is worth. If I should ever go under myself, — though, of course, I trust I 'll not, — or if ever I should find a man who has had his moral legs knocked out from under him, I know what I 'd do. I 'd pick you out as his hope of salvation."

The temptation was strong upon the listener to march the boy down to the grimy factory on Beale Street and point out to him a better hero — a man who was working his way upward by the hard toil of his hands, unmindful of the scoffs of his fellow-workmen, renouncing the dearest ties on earth, content to labor on and live apart from his kind, if only his children could be spared the misery of sharing his disgrace. There was better mettle in the boy than his uncle had divined, better than a

man of Murphy's stamp could appreciate. How he wished James Ellis could have seen the boy and heard his words.

"Is your sister like you, Ellis?" he asked, curiously speculating as to what manner of girl James Ellis's daughter had grown to be, for he had never seen her face, and only remembered a flutter of bright draperies as she rustled by him one day, coming from her uncle's office. The young man viewed King in surprise at this singular display of interest in a girl he had never seen.

"Annie is like the rest of them, fond of nothing but dress and dancing and beaux," he somewhat impatiently declared. "Turns up her nose at profitable reading, and wades through any number of trashy novels. Rather go for a drive to the Cliff or to see a minstrel show any time, than to have some good solid profit from an evening at the Geographical Society or the Academy. But for all that, I think she is a girl who respects an honest man when she knows him."

It was probably a logical result of this conversation that King in due course of time received an invitation to call at the house, which, to his surprise, was quietly seconded by Murphy in such a manner that he could not well refuse. As time went on he became a frequent visitor. He found Annie Ellis to be a bright, amiable girl, in whose society time passed pleasantly by, and he grew to feel a curious interest in these two young people, over whose heads was suspended a Damoclean sword, whose slight thread was liable at any

moment to be snapped asunder by a chance suggestion or indiscreet inquiry, on the part of their associates. He even went so far as to transgress his usual habits and occasionally appear as her escort at public places, conscious that she was aware of his story, and feeling that a habit of friendly intimacy and measured confidence in one man who had broken the law and suffered the righteous penalty might soften the shock of the discovery of her relationship to another, should time have such a revelation in store.

It was a matter of indifference to him that gossip observed their intimacy and openly linked their names. Before the stern tribunal of his own conscience he had forfeited all right to marriage by the deed he had committed in his youthful days, and he felt no solicitude on the young girl's account. Shallow in her thoughts, fickle in her tastes, immature in judgment, she was a child who would shrink from assuming the serious responsibilities of life for many years to come. Her pretty little condescensions to him, her undisguised curiosity about all relating to his prison experience, the delicate manner in which she strove to gloss over the difference in their respective social stations, moved him to deep compassion.

It was well that the engrossing nature of his daily occupation left him little time for observation or reflection, else his soul might have rebelled against the rank injustice pervading the social world, and he would have turned in loathing from the hollow affectation of virtue displayed on every

hand. No man so circumspect in his appearance, so lofty in his demeanor, so courteous in habit, as he who practiced all manner of secret vices, and in his heart held for naught the probity and honor of his fellow-men. No one more liberal in his subscriptions to charity, more unsparing in his condemnation of wrong-doers, than he who took every lawful advantage in trade, and never hesitated to transgress legal bounds when secured against detection.

And where was the man to be found who held inviolate the line that separated his neighbor's property from his own; who betrayed not a monetary trust when unconstrained by written word or bond; who scorned to take advantage of another's ignorance or error; who would not rob the widow and cheat the fatherless, and despoil the unsuspecting; who revered the holy sanctity of maidenhood and the helpless innocence of childhood; who lived faithful to the highest principles of truth, the noblest ideal of manhood? He had become a tradition of the past, or existed in a few isolated cases, so separated from all mankind by reason of his exceptional goodness that he was a virtuous monstrosity, arousing the same sense of oppressive grandeur that would be exerted by the great Basilosaurus, should he stalk abroad over the earth, shaking from his bones the accumulated dust of centuries, his gigantic stature dwindling the pigmy creations of the modern world into a sense of humbling insignificance.

Pervading all classes of womanhood was the

same disgusting spirit of hypocrisy, the same revolting pretense of purity and truth. No women so severe in their articles of religious faith, so decorous in their behavior, so rigid in their demands upon others, so shocked at the least moral laxity on the part of their associates, as that army of fashionable matrons, who enveloped themselves with an air of immaculate purity while habitually outraging the holiest principle of womanhood.

Here and there men and women were to be seen who held aloft higher standards of action, or escaped the common slough of hypocrisy by candidly asserting their moral limitations and shortcomings. But the faces of those who were striving to reach a higher level were almost invariably stamped with that sombre seal whereby are recognized the troubled hearts of those who assume the burdens belonging of right to other shoulders, and do penance for another's sins.

In the most unobtrusive manner King availed himself of the privileges of his membership in the Academy of Sciences, prosecuting his studies and researches at an hour when the long, rambling building was deserted. He rarely presented himself at the meetings unless some subject of special bearing upon his own pursuit was under discussion, and then he remained quietly in the background, never coming to the front unless he was directly called upon, when he would respond with a seriousness and modesty that disarmed all criticism. His readiness to labor in the interests of the society was quickly appreciated, and as it became apparent

that no unworthy or ambitious aims had prompted his desire for membership, he frequently found himself assigned a place on working committees, where he did honorable and efficient service. A tradition even exists that upon one occasion he made the rounds of the building and carefully removed the dust that had accumulated upon the heterogeneous collection of specimens, although any one who has ever visited the academy will be quick to recognize the bold fallacy of this statement.

Many who had in the outset predicted that the confidence placed in the ex-convict would eventuate in some new and outrageous breach of trust were forced to abandon their theory as months and years passed by, and King's reputation for integrity in all his business dealings became more and more firmly established. Those who watched him most vigilantly, confident of detecting some hidden rascality, were finally forced to concede that he was scrupulous to a fault. Did he not make a most discouraging return on the specimens of ore handed him by Bite & Spite, the mining sharps, when it was generally understood that a flattering exhibit would have been rewarded with a handsome bonus and any number of shares in the worthless stock they proposed to float on the market? And in the great suit of John Doe *et al. vs.* Sedley, brought to abate a nuisance in the shape of poisonous gases disseminated through the chimney of defendant's smelting works, had he not sided with a poor and obscure party of citizens, against a wealthy corpo-

ration whose patronage alone would have assured him a comfortable income?

Notwithstanding his quixotic actions, the assayer found his business steadily on the increase. Many who went to him a first time, governed by motives of curiosity and a desire to see a man so widely discussed, conceived a singular interest in the fortunes of the sober-looking, quiet gentleman, and even went so far as to recommend his services to their friends. By degrees his unfailing punctuality and uniform courtesy, his accurate and painstaking methods as well as the moderation of his charges, secured him a regular and increasing patronage. It was undoubtedly an advantage to have his efforts receive the indorsement of a man of such undoubted probity as Matthew Thaxter, but all the influence of his eccentric friend would have been powerless to insure success, had not his own faithful care and industry been conclusive vouchers of his reliability.

An ingenious safety clutch of his invention, designed to prevent the shocking loss of life occurring through negligent management in deep mining shafts, after repeated experimental trials, was finally perfected, and would have yielded the inventor a substantial profit; but he refused to patent the principle, declaring that no contrivance designed to lessen the sum of human suffering should have any barrier thrown in the way of its free and universal adoption.

This action on the part of King, combined with other pleasant traits, received the hearty approval of the better element of the business community,

and might have won him a certain degree of popularity, had it not been for a peculiar and glaring defect which now displayed itself in the assayer's character.

As a young man he had always been a liberal, genial fellow, flinging his money freely to right and left, — a fault which is often corrected in some degree by the sober reflection of advancing years. But now he had gone to the opposite extreme. When the aristocratic Pacific Club, in a spasm of unwonted magnanimity, resolved to condone his former sin against society in recognition of his generous action, and paid him the handsome compliment of electing him to membership in their exclusive organization, they were rudely shocked when he politely but firmly declined the proffered honor, on the ground that the expensive ways of club life were unsuited to his habits of economy. The truth was no longer to be disguised. King had grown penurious.

John Rutherford was one of the last to credit the rumor. With perfect confidence in King's generosity and a stout faith in his friendship, he entered the assayer's office one day, bearing in his hand a subscription list to a home for the adult blind. He dilated upon the matter with considerable feeling.

"I tell you, King, there 's dire need for such a place. I don't believe there 's another State in the Union where the matter has been so outrageously neglected, despite the pressing demand for such an establishment, and in the face of our vaunted lib-

erality. If you could go to the almshouse with me and see those poor fellows — seven-and-twenty of them, able-bodied men, with no more thought that they would ever come to such a pass, and consequently making no more preparation for it than you or I are making this minute — chafing and fretting their lives away because the State prefers to maintain them as paupers to teaching them independent industries! It 's a sight that would move your heart."

King had listened to this disquisition in silence, though his face grew sober.

"I am very sorry for the poor fellows, Rutherford," he declared, with singular constraint, "but what do you want me to do?"

"Put your name down here for a hundred dollars. I know it 's out of all proportion to your means, but you can spare it, and it may be a stimulus to some of these close-fisted millionaires."

"I would like to oblige you, Rutherford, but I assure you it is impossible. If you can make any use of this," — he held out a silver dollar as he spoke, — "I shall be glad to give it. But don't put it down on the list."

John Rutherford possessed a very amiable disposition, and he was a stanch friend of King's, but at this moment the good man was so vexed by previous humiliations and disappointments in the prosecution of his unselfish task, that this niggardly act seemed more than he could bear. From King, too, the man whom he had so zealously befriended, in whose inherent nobility and unselfishness he had placed such unquestioning faith!

He felt like one who had received a personal affront, and was strongly tempted to reject the stingy donation with a stinging retort, which would have eased his pent-up wrath and revealed to the assayer the contempt in which he held his contribution. But the picture of his helpless blind men mastered his temper, and he meekly accepted the sum, entered it with painstaking accuracy upon his cash account, and left the place without a word.

King looked after him wistfully, and at one moment seemed about to call him back, but he controlled the impulse, and addressed himself with energy to his work.

It was not alone in dark streets or shadowy corners that King encountered phantom reminders of his previous life. At a notable social gathering at a fashionable house on Taylor Street, he received the honor of a presentation to the Marquis de Riviera, a Spanish gentleman of fabulous wealth, who was making the tour of the world incognito, and tarried for a while to enjoy the honors which democratic San Francisco so lavishly dispenses to its titled guests. The Marquis was rumored to have found an additional attraction in the person of a fair young girl, the daughter of a railroad magnate, whose shallow head was dazzled by his attentions. While the introduction was being made King looked steadily at the Marquis, and the Marquis gazed at him. Then King leaned over and spoke a few words in the ear of the grandee.

"May I have a word with your Grace in private?"

Many looked daggers at King for his presumption, but the Marquis hastened to accede to his request. They moved to one side, and King drew out his watch.

"The boat for Victoria leaves at precisely eight o'clock to-morrow morning," he said. "It is now nearly twelve. Don't you think you had better be off at once, in order to insure an early start, my dear Marquis? Allow me to show you the way to the hat-room."

The two men found their way through the hall and up the stairs, to the surprise and wonder of observers. On the first landing the man of rank turned and confronted his adviser with a look of vengeful wrath.

"Look here, I 've got too good a thing to leave! You blab on me and I 'll blab on you."

"As for that," returned King, with indifference, "tell ahead. You can say nothing of me that is not already known."

"What! they know" —

"The whole story," replied King, gravely.

"By Jove! And yet ask you here? How did you manage it, King?"

"I did not manage it. I did not care for it. I fought my way along without help or recognition for two years. Some of my old friends found me out, and were good enough to trust me. I am trying to prove myself worthy of their confidence. That is all."

To escape the storm of inquiry and regret which would have inevitably ensued if he had publicly

notified his hostess of his departure, the Marquis took his leave by slipping down a rear stairway, and King, returning to the gay scene below, was greeted with looks of suspicion and disfavor.

"Where is the Marquis, Mr. King?"

"Yes, where is the Marquis? I saw him go up the staircase with you not five minutes ago."

The second speaker was his hostess, and although her words were playfully spoken, there was an undertone of earnest which called him to account for the strange disappearance of the distinguished visitor.

"The Marquis recollected a pressing engagement which it was imperative he should fulfill without delay."

"And he has dared to go without apology or leave-taking? What sort of manners are these?" The worthy woman eyed King as if determined to hold him responsible for the mortification and dismay she felt.

"You cannot expect men of rank to act like ordinary beings!" he expostulated. "They are accustomed to being laws unto themselves. Ordinary mortals, and especially plain members of a republic, cannot appreciate the sovereignty of superior natures."

"Superior natures!" commented the hostess, with asperity. "I wish these superior natures would recognize the laws of superior breeding. Mr. King, there is something you will not tell me. There is mischief in your eyes, sir."

He escaped the battery of her bright eyes and

sharp queries, and a little later passed within the shelter of a curtained alcove. He had fallen into a habit of withdrawing early from all social gatherings, but upon this occasion outstayed his accustomed limits, not wishing to be in any way associated with the disappearance of the titled guest. He was not destined to occupy his retreat alone. There was a cessation of music in the large apartment beyond, the dancers strolled into the adjoining apartments, the curtain parted, and Margaret Thaxter invaded his solitude. A cold flood of moonlight poured through the window, and revealed the paleness of her face as she recognized him, but she greeted him with well-feigned cordiality.

"Some good providence sent you here, Mr. King. I am in distress, and if you have your pocket-knife at hand I call upon you to succor me. This is the penalty of dancing in a crowded room, and with a boy of twenty."

She was clad in a thin white dress of some crape-like texture, whose sheer draperies extended down the back, from neck to hem, in an unbroken line. Upon one shoulder the gauzy stuff was torn quite away, and drooped over her arm and adown her skirt, like a broken pinion.

"First, a pin here!" she instructed him with childlike simplicity, and he obeyed her directions without a word, jealously hiding the bare shoulder beneath the misty folds of white. Margaret Thaxter was a modest woman, with the sense of maidenly delicacy peculiar to New England women, and

never exposed her person to the rude gaze of a crowd.

"Now, if you will be kind enough to cut away this strip," — holding out the torn drapery, — "if your blade is sharp, and you will run it along this fold, Mr. King, no one will know that it has ever been torn." The keen blade flashed through the thin fold, and the severed strip laid in his hands. He folded it carefully and placed it in his breast pocket.

"You will throw it out of the window, if you please." She spoke with cool authority, but he hesitated before obeying her. He had adhered faithfully to her injunctions, and during the two years and more that had elapsed since his reëntry in society, upon the occasions when some general gathering had brought them together in the same house, he had met her with a distant recognition, or passed her with a friendly greeting in more intimate encounters. Could it be possible she still feared that he might press his old claims, or interpret a single impulsive act into an assertion of forfeited rights? He drew the rag from his pocket and flung it through the window, where it drifted slowly downward, catching in a bough of bon silene roses, where they watched it wave and flutter in the night breeze like a wandering breath of mist.

Her usual self-possession was restored by his ready assent to her command, and she turned to him with the air of friendly interest she had adopted since his return.

"You confine yourself too closely to your work,"

she said. "You are becoming absorbed in your scientific pursuits. You go about moody and preoccupied, thinking of nothing but business. Go back to the recreations of your boyhood. Join us in a riding party next Saturday. We always have a merry company."

"It is against my principle of life," he objected. "I deny myself all unnecessary luxuries. I have a good and valid reason."

She scanned his face in silence, observing his embarrassed manner, his abstraction, as if he were engaged in some careful calculation, and a sudden flood of light illumined her face; but the emotion was transient or speedily subdued, and she resumed her tone of friendly argument.

"I dispute the wisdom of your principle."

"Prove to me its fallacy, and I will yield the question."

"Very well. You separate yourself too much from cheerful contact with people. Every step you gain in a social way is advance in your business. Besides, your health will break down under too close confinement. A couple of hours' brisk riding twice a week in the fresh salt air will be the best investment you can make, and return you a hundredfold profit in strength and vitality. You see I speak as a business woman as well as a medical adviser."

"Your logic is unanswerable. I promise to be on hand."

CHAPTER XIX.

A RIDE TO THE BEACH.

On a bright fall day a merry horseback party assembled outside of the gates of the Thaxter place. The ladies were clad in neatly fitting habits, with jaunty little hats drawn closely over their foreheads in defiance of the stiff ocean breeze, and with one exception rode gentle, dispirited animals, which they sat with uncertain grace. Many of the gentlemen affected the jockeyish attire of the English horseman. One among them, a man of slight physique, who was attired in plain citizen's clothes, with a dark slouch hat, and rode a noble iron-gray horse, was a figure distinctive among the rest.

"Bless the boy!" soliloquized old Betsey, furtively peeping through the parted slats of a Japanese shade. "Many 's the time I 've seen him along before, the liveliest and biggest mischief-maker among 'em. And now he 's that quiet and sober one would think he 'd nothing in common with the rest. Oh, well-a-day! the world goes up and the world goes down, and sometimes it 's one on top, and sometimes t' other!"

Unconscious of old Betsey's sage reflections, the gay cavalcade started out, observing no formal order, but riding four and five abreast, on the

broad, smooth road. Endicott, who had spurred forward to claim a place at Miss Thaxter's side, smiled in open triumph as he perceived the discomfited expression of others less fortunate.

"It is so natural." The young lady who addressed King was Annie Ellis, the daughter of his old friend the convict, a young girl for whom Margaret Thaxter seemed to have suddenly conceived a violent liking, and who had become a preferred guest at all the little social gatherings over which the latter ruled.

"What is so natural?"

"The homage every man, and almost every woman, too, pays to Margaret Thaxter."

King followed the direction of her gaze and noted the stately figure, the tasteful dark-brown habit, the shapely head, the bronze hair threaded with gold, the small hat with its curling feather, the delicate contour of her cheek, the easy grace of her movements.

"She is very charming," he said.

"I don't think you do her justice, Mr. King," frowned his companion. "It is not simply that she has a lovely face and a sweet voice, and is so bright and accomplished. Those are natural endowments, and she could not help them if she would. But she is so fine and strong and true. And she is brave — brave as a lion."

"She does not look very fierce," pleasantly replied King, as a sharp turn in the road brought the riders face to face, and they had a glimpse of the bright, womanly countenance.

"You do not understand;" and Miss Annie gave her small pony an impatient touch with the whip, that caused the animal to shy to the side of the road.

"I did not mean physical courage," she continued, and then she bent over and stroked the horse's mane in atonement for her harsh act. "I think she has something more wonderful than that — true moral heroism. It is not to be expected that a man should find her out. Women never show their best side in the company of men. But you should see her in the society of women. She takes us to task so frankly and fearlessly, and then follows her sharp words with a bright little laugh that dulls the sharp edge of her rebuke. But I am sure we never forget what she says."

Several bursts of speed on the road changed the relative position of the riders as they progressed westward. When they entered the Park Miss Thaxter flung a laughing challenge over her shoulder to King.

"Mr. King, I dare you to a race!"

They sped like the wind along the smoothly macadamized ground, but as they reached a place where a side road diverged from the main drive, she guided her horse thither, and suddenly drew the rein.

"I want a little talk with you, Philip King," she declared, frankly.

He bowed silently, and they rode slowly on in the shadow of the tall fir-trees.

"Are you making the most of your opportuni-

ties?" The playful look had passed from her face, leaving it sober and thoughtful, and her speech was like the voice of an accusing conscience.

"You have a meaning in what you say. Tell me what you are thinking," and his eyes sought her face as if trying to divine what was passing in her mind.

"I am thinking of a newspaper report I read fourteen years ago: A young man accused of a felonious crime, instead of defending his own cause, rose in the police court and made a gallant plea for the little children he had seen neglected and abused. To-day he is free, subject to no control save that of his own will and conscience, but he is so busily engaged in polishing his shield that he has forgotten the weak and helpless. I am disappointed in him."

"Not forgotten!" earnestly protested her companion. "Say rather that he has become wiser, less headstrong, better able to measure his own power. What influence do I possess? Who would listen to me if I should renew the old plea?"

"Who will be listened to so readily as the man who speaks from his own personal experience? Even at that time you stirred the authorities to some action, although their movement was the merest apology for a reform. They placed first a screen between the women's cage and the children's bench, and afterwards put the little ones in an open cage adjoining, where the education of the ear was substituted for the education of the eye."

"I wonder who has the regulation of affairs about

the Old City Hall," said her companion, thoughtfully. "I doubt if the responsibility rests with the prison officers. I suppose it is under the control of some higher officials."

"Is n't it in the hands of the Board of Supervisors? And our friend Mr. Clayton is on the board."

"Good! I believe you are right." The mention of Clayton's name seemed to inspire him with new interest and hope.

"I believe your suggestion is good and feasible," he proceeded, thoughtfully. "It is very probable that all the eloquence in the world, and all the need, might not exert the influence upon such a body which would come from a direct appeal, no matter how obscure the individual from whom it emanates. They will scarcely dare refuse it," he added with some warmth. "Every such plea voices, in a certain degree, the demand of the public to whom they owe their offices. But if they should meet it with indifference, I think I know of a way by which I can reinforce my prayer with a personal appeal that cannot be ignored."

"One more word, Phil." The old familiar term of address dropped unconsciously from her lips. King looked away for a moment over the monotonous sand dunes in the distance, flecked with the purple and gold of wild lupine and poppy, then turned and met her earnest look with calm attention.

"A new command?" he lightly questioned.

She disregarded the tone of his reply, and her

face was sad and troubled as if under the spell of some oppressive memory.

"You have never been back to San Quentin since you left?"

"Back to that hell upon earth? No!" He repelled the suggestion with the same aversion that a small-pox patient might have exhibited at a proposal that he should revisit the pest-house which had been the scene of his miserable and humiliating struggle with a loathsome disease.

"Why don't you go?"

"To that accursed den of infamy! You would not ask if you had ever been there. The very atmosphere is contamination."

A richer color than the keen ocean breeze had power to evoke tinged the girl's cheek at this rejoinder, but she bravely persevered.

"Yet there are men who must stay on — some for a whole lifetime. Their existence is colorless and monotonous, devoid of hope or consolation. Some of them will come out again in time, and try to take up their lives as you have done. They need the encouragement and stimulus of a brave example. They need you."

King reflected gravely on her words, without replying. Was it possible that in his own struggle he had been neglecting unseen responsibilities? His crime, ever shifting its aspect, presented itself in a new light, and with a new chain of dependent duties. To aid, to cheer, to strengthen others who had fallen like himself — this was another of its lessons. Margaret Thaxter misconstrued his silence.

"Are you not to be persuaded?" she said, despairingly. "Have you then no sympathy for that army of men huddled like so many sheep in that narrow compass? Have you forgotten the foul air of the cells, the choking gases that arise, the harsh tones of the guards, the dearth of kindly words" —

He interrupted her passionate appeal with an exclamation of horror and dismay.

"Great God! You have been there, and within the gates!"

"I have," the girl assented, and her eyes met his with the same innocent courage that had commanded the respect of a thousand lawless men within the walls of the penitentiary the previous week. "But I assure you I had hard work to get in," she frankly confessed. "The warden actually attempted to refuse me admission." She looked at King as if expecting an expression of sympathetic surprise; but it was not forthcoming, and she renewed the account of her grievances.

"He told me that he had refused admission to the Governor's wife and a party of her friends not two days before. I told him that I was not the Governor's wife, but Margaret Thaxter, and he must let me pass. He said that he would not permit the lowest of the female convicts to pass through the gate; that it was as much as a woman's life was worth to cross the yard. I saw it was useless to attempt to convince him by argument, and I said: 'Warden Fisher, I have promised a dying child to place in her father's room the birthday gifts pre-

pared by her own little fingers, and you must unlock those gates.' "

"And he did so?"

"Of course!" She seemed to accept the concession as a natural and inevitable conclusion. "Some of the men who were idling in the yard gathered about the door and watched me. I think it did their hearts good, poor fellows, for they were as interested as children when I explained to them about the little girl, and some of them were deeply touched. You should have seen old Wilson's face when he came in and saw the pretty knick-knacks and read the little girl's letter. She is wasting with a slow, hopeless disease. He will never see his little daughter again."

Philip King made no response as she concluded the story of her adventure. The promise he was about to exact from her to never again subject herself to such peril was hushed upon his lips. A swift conviction seized him that even in these corrupt days the mantle of perfect innocence is more invulnerable than an armor of steel.

"But we must ride faster or we cannot overtake our party; and we have not had our race," she said.

She touched her horse lightly with her whip as she spoke, and the spirited creature fled over the smooth road, scarcely seeming to touch the ground with his hoofs. The animal King rode kept a fine, even pace, which promised to give him the vantage before the race was run. Rustic summer-houses, music-stands, pavilions, greenhouses, lawns,

shrubs, and flower-beds flew by in rapid-moving panorama. The keen excitement of the sport lent a childish animation to Miss Thaxter's face. They rounded a turn in the road, the lady leading by a couple of rods, when her horse gave a wild swerve, reared, plunged, and came to a stand-still, his bridle firmly grasped in the stout hands of a policeman.

"And this is the time I caught you!" roared the angry functionary. "It's ashamed you ought to be, using the park roads as a race-track. The commissioners said we're to make a example — a example, d' ye hear? — of the first ones that came along to-day."

"Do you know that you came near causing this lady to be thrown from her horse?" fiercely demanded King, who came up at that moment, feeling an old demon of temper rising in his heart as he witnessed the rough act, and possessed of a wild temptation to leap from his saddle and afford the blue-coated guardian of the peace an opportunity to taste the virtues of his own club.

"Sir, you libel the lady's horsemanship! I'm free to confess there's not many in this town can sit a horse like that." The officer's eyes traveled past the inflated nostrils and proudly arched neck of the animal he held, to the stately young woman on his back.

"Bless my soul, it's Miss Thaxter!" His hand dropped from the bridle, and he grinned in a sheepish manner.

"How finely you look in your new uniform, Daniel," said the lady, pleasantly; "and how glad

I am to see you here. You don't know how I have been longing for some of those great pansies in the round bed over there. I should have taken the law into my own hands and plucked some long ago, but I feared some officious policeman might come along and have the audacity to arrest me!" and she laughed mirthfully.

The stout fellow lumbered with alacrity across the lawn, glad to escape the fire of her light satire and the bright mockery of her glance, returning shortly after with his hands filled with velvety treasures, which she received with exclamations of delight.

"And how are Mary and the babies?" she resumed, with arch, mischievous eyes, that saw and reveled in his humiliation. He stammered forth a confused response, and she proceeded to heap coals of fire upon his head.

"Tell Mary I have had a bundle of flannels and odds and ends of finery for the little people done up for her these six weeks past. And oh, Daniel, it was so good of you to stop my horse when you thought he was running away."

"Miss Margaret, I would rather have lost my place on the force than done it!" blurted out the poor fellow, in deep contrition.

"But now you will let me go on my own recognizance."

Her pleasant smile restored the man's peace of mind, and, fastening the pansies at her throat and in her belt, she flung him a graceful acknowledgment as she rode away.

The rest of the party had been lingering over the orchids in the greenhouse, and were only just coming up the main road. Miss Ellis exclaimed aloud, as she saw the rich color of the flowers contrasted with Miss Thaxter's habit.

"Miss Margaret, how did you manage it? Do you know I tried to bribe the head-gardener to cut me only one of those crimson blossoms, but he was incorruptible. I believe you have some witchcraft about you." And she viewed the young lady with good-natured envy.

"You would not believe me if I told you how I came by them," replied Margaret Thaxter, with a smile.

"We would believe anything," said young Endicott. "For my part, I am thoroughly convinced that Miss Thaxter is a sorceress. I shall not be in the least surprised to find a blossom of the Victoria Regia in a tank in her parlor, the next time the queenly plant is in bloom."

As they came in sight of the sea, stretching away vast and limitless into the gray distance, silence fell upon the party. A huge bank of fog was drifting into the Golden Gate, obscuring the rugged hills to the north; white-winged ships lay off along the horizon, waiting for a favorable change of wind, while far to the south the rocky reefs of Pigeon Point jutted out into the sea, their outlines veiled beneath a blue mist. The water was at high tide, and lashed itself into a fury as it encountered the rocky barriers along shore, leaving a fringe of white foam on the sand, as it fell back spent and exhausted.

As they loitered on the beach the gentlemen of the party engaged in a hot political discussion, arraying themselves with the two great parties of the day. Endicott, who had drawn up his horse beside King, listened to the debate with the curious interest of an intelligent foreigner.

"I see you take no part in the dispute, Mr. King," he said at length; "but of course you have your convictions. May I ask which way you vote?" The frequent mysterious allusions which had been dropped in relation to King's career had whetted the interest of the young fellow, and while he had been too well bred to attempt to learn their meaning, he found a peculiar satisfaction in eliciting the opinions of the silent man.

On this occasion King gave him a look that the Englishman never forgot.

"I do not vote."

"Ah, like so many of your countrymen, disgusted with politics. Don't blame you. They are a nasty thing the world over."

Had King elected to drop the matter, no further thought would have been given to his statement. So ignorant is the average American of his country's laws, that not one of the men present grasped the meaning of his assertion. But he had no ambition to pose as one of the countless thousands of his countrymen who assume an attitude of lofty contempt toward public matters, and scorn the mire of politics, while in truth accountable for the very evils they condemn, which are the direct result of their apathy and inaction. Moved by the

honest impulse of a candid nature forever done with deceit, he chose to declare his misfortune.

"You do not understand. I am disfranchised."

"What! My dear fellow, I beg pardon."

Endicott was manifestly distressed at his blunder, and wondered in what extraordinary political complications this grave, intelligent man could have been involved, that he should have forfeited a right so dear to the heart of every patriot, whether or no he chose to exercise it. He made an awkward attempt to express the thoughts that flitted through his mind.

"Really, Mr. King, I am surprised. Do you know, you are so calm, so deliberate, so thoughtful, that you are the last person I should have suspected of apostasy to a government so liberal in its policy."

"My apostasy was not to political, but to civil law."

Margaret Thaxter, who had reined up her horse a little to one side, a casual and indifferent witness of the discussion, caught the last words, and rode directly toward the two men, bewilderment and pain replacing the careless look on her face.

"Mr. King, what do you mean?"

"What I said, Miss Thaxter. It is evident that you are not familiar with the laws of our State. Refer to section 1048 of the Political Code, and you will learn that a convict who has served out his sentence has forfeited his rights of citizenship. If I live fifty years I can never cast a vote. The freed felon is truly the 'man without a country.'"

The dull boom of the breakers, the wash of the waves upon the sand, the hoarse cry of sea birds sweeping low over the water, sounded a melancholy refrain to the confessed tragedy of a human existence. The intelligence came with such a shock to all the members of the little group that no one found words to reply. Endicott himself, stirred with deep compassion, chancing to look toward the spirited girl who had spoken, marveled to see her features convulsed as if with a spasm of quick pain, while sea and fog were guiltless of the moisture that bedewed her cheek.

As Margaret Thaxter rode homeward by Endicott's side, her companion noted that her bright sprightliness of manner and audacity of speech had abandoned her. Silent and distracted, with drooping head and overcast face, an unprejudiced observer would have imagined that the burden of disgrace had descended upon her rather than King, who, a few rods ahead, firm and erect in his saddle, had grown talkative beyond his wont, and maintained his part in the gay fire of jest and raillery that flew about him.

CHAPTER XX.

A PLEA FOR THE CHILDREN.

THE honorable Board of Supervisors, who held in their keeping the material interests of the city, consisted of twelve representative gentlemen, elected every two years, and carefully chosen from the tax-payers of the city. The voters were wont to congratulate themselves, upon the occasion of these biennial elections, that their candidates were invariably "solid men" — a qualification which referred not to the characteristics of heart or brain which distinguished the man, as might be mistakenly supposed, but to the amount of cash to his credit at the bank, or the length of his tax-roll. In their blind worship of Mammon the worthy citizens of San Francisco unhappily ignored the fact that the greed of gain does not invariably subside with the accumulation of property, and that the same commercial instinct which lays the foundation of financial prosperity may find difficulty in resisting the alluring baits held out by wealthy corporations, who find it to their interests to gain the good-will of municipal officers.

A curious phase of this combination of moral duplicity and skillful financiering had lately been displayed in the battle for a franchise between the

Goat Island Air Line Railway Company and the Lime Point Universal Communication Company, two rival street-car lines. So cunningly did the wary members of the board manage the double transformation act of appearing to serve the city while in reality conducting themselves as befitted judicious conservators of their own interests, and pursuing a deep-laid scheme for the furtherance of individual profit; so craftily did they contrive to impugn the motives of those among their number who steadfastly resisted corrupt approaches, that upon the outgoing of the board it somehow happened that the crafty thieves, if not honored by a reëlection, retired to private life covered with glory and distinguished by public testimonials, while the honest members sank into obscurity, under a dark cloud of suspicion and disgrace.

George Clayton bade fair to share the fate of his luckless predecessors. Entering the board with a high devotion to the city's welfare, laboring with the purest motives to advance all good schemes, and to defeat corrupt legislation, he had been drawn into one compromising situation after another, until a question of water rights had been brought before the body, when he had been openly charged with owning the controlling interest in the stock of a wild-cat company, of whose existence he was apprised for the first time. Under these circumstances it was not to be expected that he should hail with undue pleasure the prospect of introducing to the board, at its regular meeting, one evening, a man of questionable repute, who presented

himself with the avowed intention of demanding the correction of abuses connected with the city government. He told himself that he would never have been beguiled into such an indiscreet undertaking, had it not been for the irresistible manner his wife always knew how to assume when she had a special favor to ask of him.

"Abuses!" inwardly groaned Mr. Clayton. "What with street sweeping contracts and fire ordinances, street-car franchises and paving contracts, gas and water rates and sewer swindles, it 's like cleaning out the Augean stables to attempt to free this city from corruption and wrong-doing."

It was therefore not to be marveled at if the excellent gentleman betrayed a little of his secret annoyance as he paved the way for King's introduction to the board. He liked King sincerely, had deplored his crime, placed faith in his reformation, trusted him sufficiently to receive him with cordiality in the heart of his family. But to become sponsor for any remarks he might choose to make in a public meeting was an altogether different affair, and beads of perspiration stood on the poor man's brow.

If he entertained any misgivings as to the figure his protégé might cut on the occasion of his appearance in the rôle of a public speaker, his doubts were immediately set at rest. As Clayton concluded, King rose from his seat, and with a leisurely step advanced to a place where he could command a view of his hearers, and address them to the best advantage. He stood his ground with the firm

pose and easy grace of a man whose mind was too thoroughly imbued with the substance of what he had to say, to leave any room for self-consciousness.

"Gentlemen of the Board of Supervisors," he began, "I do not present myself before you to urge any personal claim upon your consideration, nor do I appear as the agent of any individual or corporation, suing for the city's patronage or favor. The adult portion of the community is capable of pressing its own suits, and needs no intercession. I come to plead the cause of childhood — of the young and innocent, who must bear their wrongs in silence unless a strong voice espouses their rights, and a stout arm is interposed in their behalf.

"The city of San Francisco makes humane provision for the sick and unfortunate who fall helpless upon her streets, and exhibits tender compassion for the inebriate who reels from the wild delirium of drink into the waiting arms of death. Decent quarters and high living await your moneyed criminal. The most disreputable habitué of the police court bridges the space of time intervening between his arrest and commission to the House of Correction by availing himself of a friendly offer of bail. The vagrant who wanders through your streets in the morning sleeps in a comfortable bed in the almshouse at night. The poor wretch whose brain is distraught by sorrow or dissipation receives tender consideration and care. What provision do you make for the little children whom an unhappy fate sets adrift upon your streets?

"In the foulest portion of Kearny Street rises a dismal building you call the city prison. Its three upper floors constitute a small portion of the working machinery of the law, while in the damp dungeons below are herded the miserable scourings of humanity for whose detection and punishment all this elaborate superstructure is conducted. In the main hall of this prison, in full sight of the entrance, and commanding a view of every foul-mouthed drunkard or lewd woman who is brought in during the night, are gathered the babes and nurselings who have the depravity to lose themselves upon the streets or commit the heinous crime of transgressing the eight o'clock ordinance.

"I do not speak from hearsay evidence. More than thirteen years ago I committed a crime which entitled me to taste the sweets of this institution's hospitality. Among all the nauseous sights and sounds of my first night's initiation, which will live in my memory forevermore, I count as the crowning horror the spectacle of half a dozen little children, rescued from the darkness and desolation, the hard pavements and chill air of our city streets by night, only to be consigned to the less tender mercies of our city's law, and subjected to the contaminated atmosphere and vile associations of that wretched place. I assert that to-day this condition of matters remains essentially unchanged.

"Some one has said — I think it was England's woman poet, with her warm and tender heart — that 'A child's cry in the darkness curseth deeper than the strong man in his wrath.' If all the bit-

ter cries that have been wrung from childish lips in that damp cellar could resound in chorus, if all the ruin it has wrought in innocent lives could be voiced, there would swell a demand for vengeance, so mighty and so appalling that the nation might well bow its head in shame. There is not another city in the Union which dooms the pure children gathered from its streets to consort with hardened criminals on the damp floor of a dungeon. I do not believe there is another city in the civilized world which would tolerate such an outrage.

"Gentlemen of the Board of Supervisors, the responsibility and the remedy lies with you."

There was a buzz of excitement in the lobby as King resumed his seat. Varying shades of vexation, surprise, annoyance, and consternation had been exhibited in the countenances of the honorable board during the progress of his speech.

"It is hardly possible that such a state of affairs as the gentleman describes could have existed all this time, and we be ignorant of it," sourly asserted a lantern-jawed man who occupied a conspicuous place on the Committee of Public Buildings.

"Are you sure you are not putting it a little too strong, Mr. King?" demanded Mr. Clayton, peevishly. For the life of him he could not see how he had ever been so weak or so stupid as to commit himself to identification with such a complaint, which would no doubt result in the appointment of a committee of investigation, and recriminations through the columns of the daily press, distasteful in the extreme to a man of his retiring tastes. No

doubt the charges would be construed as part of an adroit scheme to foist a new building upon the city, and they would accuse him of being interested in the contract.

"To impart a more definite coloring to my story, I will give you a special instance that occurred on the occasion to which I have alluded," resumed King, composedly, and his eyes were fixed on the face of his friend. "Among the children who were on the bench that night was one beautiful little girl, who had strayed from home at nightfall, whose pretty garments had been torn and soiled, and whose face was so smeared with dirt and tears that she looked like any other little neglected denizen of the streets. As I awaited assignment to my cell, the small creature, recognizing something familiar in my face, flung herself upon me, hiding her eyes in fright and horror, clinging to me with all the force of her tiny hands, begging me to take her away from the hideous place. I entreated permission to take her with me until her parents should call to claim her, and tried to have a message sent to them, but my requests were disregarded. That child was the daughter of a gentleman who is here to-night, and who occupies a seat upon your honorable board."

Clayton roused from his apathy at the speaker's last words. His memory spanned a dozen years with a leap, and he leaned forward with a look of horror on his face.

"My God, King! Do you mean my girl — Bessie?"

King bowed his head in silence.

A sensation stirred the members of the board. The question appeared in a new light, thus brought directly home to one of their own members, and indignant comments were freely made. Clayton seized paper and pen. Stimulated by the picture of his innocent child exposed to such revolting influences, he brooked no formalities, and repelled the suggestion of committees of investigation. The resolution he drew up was simple and forcible.

Resolved, That the Committee on City Prison be instructed to see at once that suitable provision is made for the comfort and care of stray children who may be brought in from the streets; that they be assigned quarters remote from the prisoners, and be provided with comfortable beds and healthy food.

The resolution was passed without a dissenting voice, and went into force the following week.

It so chanced that on the same evening during which King made his forcible plea for the children before the board of supervisors, John Rutherford arose to advocate his election as a member of the Microscopical Society. This association was one of the most important amateur organizations of the city, and comprised many of the wealthiest and most aristocratic of San Francisco's *dilettante*. Its annual receptions were held in the lecture-room of the Mercantile Library, and were numbered among the most stylish and exclusive of social events. On such occasions the members of the society each stood in charge of his own magnificent

instrument, displaying choice specimens magnified to the highest available power, the whole exhibition offering an entertainment as unique as it was instructive. But few came thither for instruction, for the ambition of the members was directed less toward providing education for the community than to contributing amusement for prominent society ladies, who invariably appeared in handsome visiting costumes, and armed with opera-glasses, with which to diagnose their neighbors' toilets. These elegant ladies gasped in ecstatic delight at the rich-hued life-current speeding through the transparent blood-vessels of an unlucky frog skinned and impaled alive for their delectation, or shuddered in conscious modesty over the venomous fangs of an imprisoned *Pulex irritans*, bound hand and foot with invisible withes, whose goggle eyes glared back at them from beneath the lens a vicious promise of closer acquaintance at some future day.

Before these gentlemen, therefore, John Rutherford rose to present his friend's claims for election. He was acting without King's knowledge or sanction, for the mineralogist had planned the affair as a pleasant surprise, and was stirred with kindly emotions as he pictured the delight and profit that King would derive from attendance at the regular meetings. Rutherford was in truth so absorbed in glad anticipation, so confident of the hearty co-operation of his associates in any measure he might suggest, that he did not observe the cold stare of disapproval which greeted his proposal of the name, nor yet the apathetic manner with which the so-

ciety listened to his speech. It should be mentioned that John Rutherford had not the slightest gift for oratory, and while he was capable of carrying on a personal dialogue with force and eloquence, he had a very diffident and stilted way of addressing a larger audience.

"Mr. King possesses all the qualifications which commend him for membership in our society, gentlemen," he said. "He is really an enthusiast on the subject of the microscope, and has been since he was a mere boy. He is very expert in mounting specimens, — a valuable desideratum in a place so far removed from professional workers who make that delicate operation a specialty. Gentlemen, I am sure you will find Mr. King a congenial and agreeable companion, and I trust you will extend him your favor."

As the mineralogist resumed his seat, with an uncomfortable consciousness that he had by no means acquitted himself as creditably as he would have liked, his discomfort was heightened by the action of a tall, thin gentleman, elegant in dress and manner, who struck an easy attitude in his chair, twirling his gold watch-chain with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, and bending upon Rutherford a keen and cutting look, remarked, —

"I should like to inquire if the gentleman who has presented this name is acquainted with the past life of the individual?"

"I am, sir. Every circumstance of it!" came the sturdy reply.

"Ah! Then you are of course aware that the man is a returned convict."

"I am."

The thin gentleman had not ceased to twirl his watch-chain, and said nothing more, but still regarded the mineralogist with the same well-bred scrutiny. John Rutherford tried to think of some manner in which to effectually champion the cause of his friend, but he found himself voiceless and helpless. The galling superiority of this undemonstrative gaze brought back to him the most humiliating recollection of his youth, when one day a boy of superior muscle, to wreak vengeance for some fancied wrong, lifted him up by the back of his collar and held him aloft, exposed to the scorn and ridicule of all his playfellows, and then dropped him, unpunished, to the ground.

Another member of the society, not so well versed as his predecessor in the fine arts by which men slay their fellow-men without flash of sabre or roar of musketry, took up the combat.

"If Mr. Rutherford were not an old and respected member of our organization, I should be tempted to demand of him a severe reprisal for the gross insult offered to our society. As he is one of our number, and I am assured has our interests deeply at heart, I can only account for his proposal on the score of his kind heart and amiable nature, which prevent him from taking the full measure of a criminal's iniquity, or of calculating the injury to our association if we should let down our social bars and receive every applicant who chooses to knock for admission."

"I must correct the gentleman upon one point,"

interrupted John Rutherford. "Philip King not only is not aware that I contemplated suggesting his name to-night, but he has never signified his desire to become a member of our society."

"That circumstance does not alter the principle involved, Mr. Rutherford," declared the stout gentleman, pompously. "The moment we cease to demand the most stringent moral and social qualifications in our members, we forfeit our dignity, our influence, our exclusiveness. I am no believer in the rabid schemes for the reformation of criminals, promulgated by certain radical men of theory. Experience and observation teach us that the progress of the criminal is always downward to new depths of degradation and infamy. 'Once a thief, always a thief,' is a proverb that in forty years of active business life I have never seen controverted. Let a man once commit a misdeed sufficient to reduce him to a felon's level, and no power, human or divine, can blot out the accursed taint."

CHAPTER XXI.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"By the way, Benchley, send a man out to the house with this line to Mrs. Murphy, and let him bring down my valise and overcoat. I'll be back here in an hour."

Murphy was on the eve of a hurried departure for Virginia City, and thus concluded his instructions to his superintendent.

Benchley was a tall fellow, with a vigorous, youthful face, light hair, and a beard that curled a little close to the chin. He looked after his employer with a slight feeling of vexation. It was not a light matter to be burdened with the entire charge of a great manufactory at the busiest season of the year. Even the simple commission that Murphy had given him at parting was by no means easy to execute. It was midday, and the offices were deserted. The men who lounged about the works, eating their homely lunches or smoking their noonday pipes, were scarcely fit in dress or person to present themselves at a gentleman's house. There was nothing for it but to wait until one of the clerks made his appearance.

At that moment a man passed the office door, traversing the dingy roadway which formed the main entrance to the works, paved with black cin-

ders crushed to dust beneath the weight of heavy trucks and the tread of weary feet. His bruised hands and homely dress proclaimed him to be one of the great force of manual laborers, but his coarse garb was scrupulously neat, and his face and hands had been washed on the cessation of the morning's toil, partially divesting them of their coating of dust and soot.

"Look here, Jim!"

The superintendent observed the laborer keenly as he approached, in answer to the peremptory call. Something about him affected Benchley curiously. Although the man had presented himself with the seal of Murphy's recommendation, his character and bearing were inscrutable. Others among the laborers had some odd trick of speech or manner which revealed their nationality and breeding, and they were a free-hearted, talkative set, who made no secret of their past or present. But this man Jim, who at his own request had been placed on the pay-roll under the simple and inelegant title by which Benchley addressed him, seemed like one whose tie with existence had been severed. An odd fancy seized the superintendent that if a man had died and been buried for a score of years, and had then been miraculously brought back to life, he might act and look and speak very much like the individual who stood quietly awaiting his orders.

"Jim, do you know Mr. Murphy's place on Harrison Street?" As he put the question, it occurred to Benchley that by his answer the man might betray whether he had any acquaintance with the city, and he was not disappointed.

"Know it? Yes."

The man Jim clinched his hand as if to beat back some painful memory. The superintendent was not aware that the foundryman's handsome dwelling was built on the site of the humble cottage belonging to a relative who had disgraced his family and passed into oblivion nearly a score of years gone by.

"Very well. I wish you would take this note to Mrs. Murphy, and bring back some traps she will hand you."

He reached out the note as he spoke, but the nervous hands of the laborer hung motionless at his side, and he made no responsive gesture.

"I — I can't do it. Will you be so good as to send somebody else?"

The man began in stubborn protest, and ended with a piteous appeal. Are tormented souls in purgatory ever commanded forth to measure the depth of their own misery by tasting the sweets of a forbidden paradise? Benchley's mind was disturbed by no such sentimental considerations. He saw only a common workman, moved by a natural sense of modesty or humility, loath to present himself in his homely apparel at the house of his wealthy employer. The superintendent met his unspoken objections with a careless reassurance.

"Don't be afraid, man! They 're very pleasant sort of people, who never measure their courtesy by the cut of a man's garment or the stuff it 's made of. Likely as not you 'll get a cup of coffee and a bite of something good to eat. What! Not willing,

Jim? I'd rather send you than the rough fellows in the works, but you 're under no obligations to go if you don't like."

He had turned away and was starting off in quest of another messenger when the man stopped him.

"I 'll go. As you say, it 's a foolish thing to care. A working man 's as good as his boss any day."

The superintendent eyed him sharply as he put the note in his hand. The air of braggadocio he had assumed sat strangely on the fellow, and had a false ring, as if he were trying to disguise his agitation of the previous moment beneath an appearance of vulgar self-assertion.

Benchley returned to his office with an uncomfortable sense that he had somehow exceeded his instructions. The expression on the fellow's face as he departed on his errand gave him a peculiar and unwelcome sensation. What if his hesitation and apparent unwillingness had been only a ruse, and the rascal had some base motive for wishing to gain a glimpse of the interior of Murphy's mansion? Then he laughed at his own misgivings. Thank Heaven, the gangs of thieves and housebreakers were not commonly recruited from the ranks of honest workingmen. With this sage reflection he dismissed the subject from his mind.

The man Jim toiled slowly up the steep grade of Harrison Street, opening Murphy's gate and advancing up the walk with a look of passive endurance on his face and a numbed sense of pain tugging at his heart. It was the first time he had visited

the place by day, though many a night had witnessed his tireless vigils before the house, under cover of the brooding darkness — friendly shield of shame and woe.

The servant who answered the bell left him standing in the hall while he conveyed the note to his mistress. Left alone, the workman looked eagerly around, half expecting to find himself amid familiar associations, or to recognize some painful memento of the past. He might have spared himself his hopes and apprehensions. Everything that encountered his eyes was obtrusively modern in stamp, from the rich tones of the Persian carpet to the stiff lines of the furniture and the Japanese decorations on the walls.

He had no time to make further observations, for his attention was arrested by the sound of voices speaking on the floor above — the first a woman's, in tones of unbridled vexation.

"Off to Nevada! I declare it 's too bad, when he promised to take us down to Monterey this week."

"Never mind, auntie. The week after will do just as well."

The unhappy man clasped his hands together, digging his nails deep into the flesh, as the notes of the blithe, girlish voice fell upon his ear. The swift conviction came over him that he was venturing too much. He should never have come.

The voices again became audible.

"All these things to be packed! Collars and shirts, and handkerchiefs and brushes, and the note-

book in the left-hand-upper-inside-pocket of his gray frock coat. I know I shall forget something."

"Can't I help you, Aunt Marcia?"

"No. Nobody can do it but myself."

An expression of resignation accompanied the words, and the voice receded as if the matronly owner had retreated within an adjoining apartment.

Then it was raised again, this time with more kindly expression.

"But I tell you what you may do, Annie. Go down and see that cook gives the boy some lunch. It makes me nervous to think of his standing there waiting for me to be through."

"Certainly."

A cumbrous hat-rack, with heavy plate-glass mirror, stood on the opposite side of the broad hall, and the messenger, turning away from the staircase, anxiously peered into its depths. He heard a light step upon the stairs, then saw a flutter of dainty garments, a small slippered foot gliding over the soft carpeting, a plump hand sliding along the rail, and a young and blooming face came into view.

He tottered strangely and caught at a large toa-wood chair. Seating himself upon it, he leaned his head against the high back, and held to the low arms for support. Resting there, his patched and faded clothing contrasted with the rich tints of the polished wood, his clumsy brogans resting on the soft pile of the carpet, his pinched old face framed by the stately gothic carvings, his long, thin fingers grasping the elaborate foliations of the low arms, he presented a grotesque picture. But the young girl saw only its pitiful aspect.

"Are you ill or tired?"

For the first time he raised his eyes slowly to her face as he heard the gentle inquiry; and with such a look! Some barbed shaft of recognition penetrated the girl's inner consciousness, and she paled and trembled with the shock.

"I — I had a little girl once!" he faltered wistfully, and then was bowed down with self-accusation, for he felt that in his desperate cry, his stammering utterance and husky voice, he had revealed the whole mournful truth.

"And you lost her?" she asked, softly, marveling at the swift sympathy between the orphaned and the childless, however wide the difference in their stations, which helped her young heart to an intuitive comprehension of his pain.

"Yes — long ago. She was only two years old when she died. It was very sudden. The doctor called it scarlet fever," he added, firmly, feeling that with every fabrication he helped to strengthen the barrier which hedged in the child from the sorrows and trials of his own existence. Never was falsehood more unselfishly conceived, more loyally enacted.

"I am very sorry."

What sweet sympathy in her voice! What radiant pity in her eyes! Then she recalled her errand, and said, with simple courtesy,—

"Let me give you a cup of coffee while you are waiting."

He had told himself when he entered the house that no morsel of food should pass his lips until he

had again crossed the threshold. He wanted none of Murphy's hospitality, nor would he subject himself to the humiliation of feeling that he had accepted aught unearned from the man who had first spurned and insulted him, and then awarded him a tardy and distrustful recognition. But his power of resistance was gone. He could not utter a dissenting word.

She led the way through the hall, designing to conduct him to the servants' quarters, but as she neared the dining-room something moved her to alter her course, and she took him into the pleasant family dining-room, paneled with laurel and black walnut, and seated him in a windowed recess looking out upon the garden. Ruled by the same unreasoning impulse, she went about the preparation of a little lunch, placing a dainty china service on a small side table, bringing a plate of light rolls, a little pat of golden butter, some cold fowl, a mould of transparent jelly, a dish of fruit, and crowning all with a cup of fragrant Mocha prepared by her own hands.

Nothing seemed too choice or good for this weary-eyed workman, whose heart was sore over his little daughter's loss. Was it a new or an old grief? She revolved the question in her mind as she motioned to him to be seated, and placed herself opposite, conscious of an impatient desire, a growing anxiety, to hear more of the little child who was dead and gone.

"How old would she have been if she had lived?"

He had obeyed her gentle mandate without question, and, although conscious of no sense of hunger, held the steaming cup to his lips, and sipped its contents with a slow, delicious relish, as if it held divine nectar. It was the first time that he had ever tasted food prepared by her hands, and in all probability it would be the last. He gazed through the window, with an absent expression on his face as he replied to her question.

"Eighteen years come next November."

"And my eighteenth birthday comes in November."

Impressed by the coincidence, she rested her elbows upon the table, and, placing her wrists together, propped her face in the palms of her hands, gazing dreamily across the table.

"Do you think — would she have been at all like me?"

God! If the girl had not kept that baby look on her face, that innocent appeal in her eyes, it would have been easier. The fragile cup rang out a tinkling protest as he brought it roughly in contact with the saucer. The appetizing food on the table remained untouched, and his hands were tightly clinched together as he hungrily searched her face. Then he tore away his gaze with a grim wrench at his heart, and looked out over the green lawn, where a floating breeze despoiled a tall syringa of its blossoms, strewing the petals upon the ground, like so many flakes of snow.

"Not a bit like you! She was a heap more sightly," he declared, wondering if earth ever held

a fairer face than the one before him. Then he rose from the table.

"A workingman's time belongs to his master. Next thing I 'll be called to account for dawdling over my errand."

The girl recoiled from his harsh words, followed so quickly by a tone of rough jocularity, but as she passed silently into the hall she gave one backward look, and her heart relented, for she caught sight of his face, and it was white and fixed like that of a dying man.

CHAPTER XXII.

BACK TO THE PRISON.

In the mean time King, overtasked with work, found no leisure to worry over personal affronts, or to pursue any philanthropic schemes. His patronage, hitherto increasing slowly and steadily, appeared to multiply from month to month. An important arbitration suit between an English company and some Nevada mine owners demanded his presence the greater portion of the day for many weeks, and frequently called him upon the stand to testify. In his press of work and absorption of mind he made no move to carry out his intention of revisiting the prison, until the month of December, when his flagging memory received a sharp and startling reminder.

As he stepped into a restaurant for a hurried luncheon one day, his old acquaintance, the negro waiter, heavily laden with dishes, made a detour in his course as he left a neighboring table, to whisper a hurried communication in King's ear.

"Bob Orndorrf he come down las' night. Ole Doyle he got anodder attack. Dey tink he gone up dis time."

The food he was eating with hearty appetite palled upon King's taste, and he set his coffee-cup

down with the liquid untasted. Glancing up to the dial of a large clock at the farther end of the room, he saw that there was yet time to catch the San Quentin boat. He paid his reckoning and hurried from the place.

An hour later he walked rapidly up the dusty road leading from the wharf to the prison grounds, and presented himself at the warden's office.

That functionary was sitting in a bamboo arm-chair, thoughtfully contemplating the smoke from his meerschaum, as it curled upward in the air. He removed the stem of the pipe from his mouth as the visitor entered, but did not alter his posture.

"Warden Eames, I suppose?" said King, quietly, addressing the official. There had been two changes of administration since his departure, and the gentleman before him was a stranger.

The warden answered with a scarcely perceptible inclination of his head.

"Will you allow me to see a sick prisoner?"

"Not visiting day," declared the warden, shortly. "Who is the man?"

"Winchester Doyle."

"Ah!" A slight sympathetic chord vibrated in the gruff voice at the mention of the old prisoner.

"A relative of his?"

"His old neighbor."

"Southern man?" said the warden interrogatively, for it was generally understood that Doyle was a newly arrived southern emigrant at the time he committed the deed which had led to his incarceration.

"No; a Californian," said King, shortly.

"But you said you and Doyle were neighbors," insisted the warden, a slight vein of suspicion creeping into his mind, and making itself audible in his voice.

"We were," repeated the visitor, quietly, "in there!" and he inclined his head in the direction of the prisoners' quarters.

"Have you been a prisoner?" The questioner leaned forward in surprise.

"Yes."

The warden surveyed his visitor from head to foot, observing his quiet taste of dress, his dignity of bearing, the sober eyes, the grim curves of the lines about his mouth, implying a habit of habitual self-constraint. But he gave no sign that there was anything about the stranger's appearance that impressed him above the ordinary visitor.

"What name?"

"Philip King."

The ex-convict possesses one questionable advantage over his fellow-men. The notoriety achieved by his name is not likely to desert him, for it is a peculiar principle of human nature that in the secret strongholds of the brain men treasure the recollection of iniquitous deeds, and the names of criminals remain as memory's household words when the names of honest men and heroes drift away into oblivion. Some worthier agency fanned the waning flames of the warden's recollection.

"What! The man Burke played such a dirty trick?"

"He made the best reparation in his power," corrected King, quietly, and the warden reflected that to look at this man and listen to his talk, no one would ever suspect that the wrong referred to had cost him four years of misery and disgrace. He would not intrude his thoughts upon the visitor, or remind him further of what must be, beneath all his assumed calm, a bitter and stinging recollection.

"I am glad you have come, Mr. King," he said, frankly; "and I don't doubt Doyle will take great comfort in seeing you."

Without further ceremony he led the way to the iron gates, and a little later King stood in the sick man's cell.

Wan with confinement, wasted with disease, crushed beneath the burden of undeserved and humiliating punishment, stretched on a mean cot in a dimly lighted cell, the old convict yet presented a majestic and impressive spectacle. Even the prostrate position could not rob the tall figure of its stately bearing, and the calm old face, with its crown of snow-white hair, was powerful and benignant as the countenance of some sculptured saint.

"Why, King!"

The sick man's face lit up with a gentle smile, and he gave the visitor's hand a faint pressure.

"Tell me about yourself, King. I have heard a little from time to time, from the men who have gone out and come back. They say you had a tough struggle at first. Does life go smoother now?" queried the invalid, with unselfish interest. And

thereupon Philip King patiently undertook to condense into one brief conversation the history of years of exhaustive struggle, discouragement, and varying success. The convict heard him without comment to the end, but the tranquil look upon his face was proof that the arid wastes of his own existence were moistened with the dew of a divine sympathy, as he contemplated another's gallant efforts at self-regeneration.

"It reminds me very much of an attempt to restore a piece of mutilated architecture, Doyle," the visitor concluded. "You don't know what a patched-up structure I am. Altered and remodeled in all sorts of warring designs, only a fragment of the outer masonry and the superstructure remain to prove any identity with my old self. Behind the solid fronts are tottering walls. Heaven knows what I should do if my props gave way."

"Don't trouble yourself about any fancied weakness, King," enjoined the aged convict, who had been regarding his visitor during the progress of his narration with a deep, soulful gaze that had in it a species of mystic divination. "Construct no bugbears from your own imagination. The influences which have operated to build up the new structure are infinitely nobler than those which moulded the old. The time will come when you will not need the props."

"Never!" asserted the younger man, in a tone so pregnant with deep feeling that the invalid bent upon him a look of keen scrutiny, withdrawing his eyes as if in disappointment when he met only a

sorrowful gaze; for King realized, as quickly as he had spoken, the mistaken construction that might be placed on his words.

"I must leave you now," he said, rising and lingering, as if loath to take his departure.

"Doyle," he began, wistfully, "your time will be up next fall."

"In August," the prisoner corrected him. "I have never lost a single credit. But it is a long reckoning to pay" —

"For a debt you never incurred," interrupted King; and his eyes flashed with indignant fire. For he recalled the circumstances of the man's life, as he had heard them from impartial witnesses: The hard-working settler, laboring to support his wife and child on a section of government land in which he had invested his little means. A reckless trespasser who felled the timber on the settler's land, indifferent to his expostulations and entreaties. Doyle standing like a grim warder on his own soil, viewing the despoliation with troubled eyes, warning the vandals to desist from their labors, and finally, when they had completed their work of destruction, in measured words, which provoked their scorn and held no hint of the awful menace that lay beneath, forbidding them to return to carry off their spoils, assuring them that he would defend his property with his life. The long and lonely vigil he kept through the dark hours of the night. The reckless and daring band which made an appearance at dawn, jeering at the man's determined resistance. The cruel threats regarding the set-

tler's little boy, who had stolen from the shanty unperceived, and hid shyly at his father's side. The slow uprising of wrath in the settler's heart. The glittering axe which had descended upon the head of his foremost aggressor, and struck him down as a man strikes down the burglar who invades the sanctity of the household and threatens the lives of the young and helpless, robbing them of what is essential to life. The hurried trial in a rough community, where the dead man had been a genial citizen, and people were disposed to look upon his treatment of the new-comer as a foolish jest, and to visit the utmost penalty of the law upon the stranger.

"It is not so very long — only eight months more." King recurred to the date of the expira- of Doyle's sentence.

"There is no use in deluding myself, King. I shall never see August in this place," replied the invalid, in a tone of calm conviction.

"But you are not old enough to justify such talk," protested King. "You speak as if you had reached threescore and ten, when in reality you belong to a long-lived race, and are still little past the prime of life."

"Ten years here are equal to a lifetime elsewhere," returned the prisoner; and King, looking back over the field of his own experience, knew that he spoke the truth. "I had looked forward to drawing my last breath in the little mountain home where my wife and boy are waiting," he continued, speaking with the same dispassionate utterance

that always characterized any reference Doyle made to his own condition.

"Was n't there some talk about a pardon at the time of the big fire?" asked King, after a short hesitancy. "There were seven men who did good work then, and they said you were one of them. It was rumored all were to be pardoned."

"A pardon!" The old man had raised himself up on his elbow at the word, and the suggestion seemed to infuse new life into his feeble veins. "Now you speak of it, I remember the lieutenant-governor came to me about that time, and asked me some questions about the names of the judge and jury that convicted me. There was some trouble about getting at the records."

"And the lieutenant-governor?"

"Was Jackson — a kind-hearted man and true gentleman."

He suddenly ceased speaking, for the other had taken his hand, and held it clasped for a moment in his own. No word was spoken, but the sick man knew that with the act King made a silent pledge, and the look that Doyle turned upon him in parting had a new and hopeful light.

Outside the door King found a deputation of his old acquaintances awaiting him, whose pleased faces and cordial greetings rendered him indifferent to the scowling aspect of others who held aloof. One man who had been lounging against the wall started up to join him in his walk across the yard. It was his old friend and fellow-prisoner, Stubbs, who having long ago mastered the intricacies of the

locksmith's trade, and finding little opportunity for its exercise when in durance vile, had just returned from a hard day's toil in the brick-yard.

"Golly! but I 'm glad to see you!"

King did not meet this effusive greeting with corresponding cordiality.

"I can't say that I am glad to see you, Stubbs, here."

The meaning emphasis he placed on the last word did not abash the prisoner, who took up the question with his old fluency of speech, through which ran a vein of reckless skepticism that was new to King.

"And where else would you be expictin' to see me, in faith? Mr. King, I 'm what your big speakers would call a 'logical consiquince,' and the State of California can take all the cridit."

The visitor was unable to dispute this assertion, and they walked on slowly in the direction of the gates.

"There 's one question I 'd like to put to you, Master Phil," began the convict, in a softened voice. "Will you be after belavin' in the new-fangled notion of spiritoolism? And d 'ye s'pose the Lord iver sinds his angels down to the world in these days?"

"The question is beyond me, Stubbs. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothin'," returned the prisoner, after the fashion of people who have something of vital importance to communicate. "Only wan of thim come up here last month. She were the prettiest

wan I iver see," pursued Stubbs, with grave exactitude, as if he was accustomed to taking an inventory of the graces and passing upon the relative merits of heavenly messengers. "Middlin' tall, with a light step that showed she 'd been used to wings, and could n't quite bring hersilf to walk like common payple. She had got the sunshine tangled in her hair comin' down, an' the color of the sky was trapped in her eyes. Her cheeks was like thim tall roses there" — pointing to a tiny inclosure, the single spot of beauty in the vile place, where, amid a dainty company of blooming flowers, a tall bush upheld a wealth of bonny pink roses. "But, Great Scott! what 's the use o' tryin' to tell what she were like! She was an angel, fair an' square."

"Where did you see her, Stubbs?" King was mystified by the prisoner's rambling talk, and wondered what odd fancy had got into the fellow's head.

"On this very spot, if you 'll take my word for it." The convict stood still, an expression of awed recollection visible upon his face. "Some of the men say she came up on a fancy sailin' craft from the city, that anchored below the pint; but it 's my belayfe she came floatin' down on the clouds, landin' somewheres along shore, an' thin come here and tried to pass herself off like common folk, thinkin' the men 'd be less afeard of her, you see, an' she 'd get a better chance to put in her work. I niver seen her ekal, niver — so brave like, so kind spoken, with eyes that smilin' that the manest rascal in the

yard would ha' been glad to let her walk over him to save her little feet from sile. An' you 'd think, to be here, she 'd turned the heads of the whole rabble. Dan Whalen, that used to cuss a blue streak all the day, ye remimber, had such a tug of it holdin' his tongue the time she were here, that I 'm blest if he hain't clean forgot how to let it loose. Ramirez, a Portugee — a new man, in for life for kickin' a Chinaman to death ; an' sure nixt they 'll be havin' up men for shootin' ducks and deer and such small fry — has a bit of fringe from a fleecy thing she had wound about her shoulders, an' they say the beggar keeps it under his pillow nights, an' says his prayers to it, an' I don't know what all. Billy Coogan — the ould reprobate! " with a magnificent scorn of his old rival, " he 's been down on his knees blubberin' an' prayin' half the time since she went away. Joe Wilson — they do say she was in his cell, an' lift some small pictures an' fancy fixin's hangin' there — he 's been like another man this month, quiet an' paceable, an' tryin' his best, it 'd seem, to plase the overseer."

King had listened to this romantic account with growing perplexity. At Stubbs's last words he gave a sudden start.

" Four weeks ago! And you say she came to see Wilson ? "

" Had the boys been a-tellin' you, Mr. King? It is n't that you 'll be after knowin' her yersilf ? "

" Thank Heaven! I do."

Something in King's reverent tone, his singular expression, his tremulous voice, impressed Stubbs

with peculiar force. The convict seized his friend almost roughly by the shoulders, turning him about so that they were brought face to face.

"It's Her! The Woman in the Case!" he asserted, and his voice broke with the last word.

King looked assent.

Stubbs leaned weakly against the jutting wall of a building, his reckless spirit daunted at the revelation.

"And I called Her — good Lord! Master Phil, you mind how you paid me off that time? If you 'd only be so kind an' twist your hand in my coat-collar and give me a regular floorer now, I think I 'd feel better."

Outside the gates King found, to his surprise, that the warden was awaiting him, and signified his intention of accompanying him to the wharf, apologizing for the absence of the stage. Throughout the walk King was silent and absent-minded, ill maintaining his part in the conversation, for he recalled his previous experience along the same path, which he had first trodden as a prisoner, bound and shackled, on his way to meet a shameful punishment, and last as a heart-weary outcast, going forth to engage in a desperate strife to win back the good name and trust he had forfeited. The humbling inner consciousness of guilt had never wholly deserted him. The blemish which steady industry and upright action were slowly purging from his name still fed upon his soul, a dark and rankling memory. With his old com-

rades within the prison he had felt at ease, but he was oppressed by a strange sense of incongruity in associating on terms of apparent equality with the governor of the prison — a man who occupied the position of an absolute autocrat over the herd of sinners under his charge, whose mere command was sufficient to subject any of them to humiliating penance. He had seen enough of the character of such men to know that they regarded their positions as involving nothing more than a round of mechanical duties; that faith in the better instincts of the prisoners was to them an unknown attribute; that their wards represented to them little more than so many brutes, to be housed and fed and made amenable to law and order. As he encountered familiar faces on the road, and noted their expression of surprise at beholding him in such august company, he felt inclined to apologize to them for having for the moment aspired to a companionship above their level, and to assure them that the honor had come to him unsought, and was the result of a passing whim on the part of the warden, or an ephemeral sensation of pity awakened by the recollection of the unjust extension of his sentence.

The warden noted his abstraction, and accounted for it in his own way. He recalled King to the actual present with one direct question.

"Mr. King, we have twelve hundred and forty men up there to-day. How many of them are worth saving?"

"Ninety per cent. of those serving their first terms. Not one in a hundred among the rest," re-

plied the visitor, promptly. It was a subject he had often considered when he was one of the degraded community.

"Of course you know the statistics. Not more than the merest fraction fail to land, sooner or later, in this or some other penitentiary, or meet a violent death. The question is, how to get at the remainder."

"Individual influence!" pronounced King, with decision. "No cut-and-dried remedies will be of the least avail. No code of treatment will strengthen a man's moral nature. The great mass go down for the lack of help at the critical moment. You see I speak from experience," he added, while his face flushed hotly as he realized the dubious point from which he uttered his opinions.

"Then be one of the individuals!" cried the warden, heartily, noting the younger man's embarrassment, and resolved to dissipate it at once and establish the grounds of their relationship beyond all possibility of further misunderstanding. "And let this be the beginning, not the end, of your visits."

A week later Winchester Doyle opened his eyes after a long day-sleep to see a tall young stripling standing by his bed, and to trace in the manly face the features of the child who had stood by his side on the day of the tragedy that had clouded his life.

"It was good of you to come, Robbie," he said, weakly. "Tell mother I tried to hold out."

"Don't you think you could travel to-day, father? We can take it by easy stages."

"Travel!" The old man raised himself to a sitting posture, searching the young man's face with a wild hope in his eyes. "King has done it! It has come!"

"And you are free to go as soon as you are able."

"Able!" He was already off the bed, and trying his weight upon his palsied limbs. "There, there, Robbie! What is the use of trying to make an old man smart and fine? Wait till we get near home, boy. What! She is here, waiting for me outside? Take the brush yourself, lad. My old hand trembles, and my eyes are not clear. Brush the hair straight back from the forehead, Robbie. She liked to see it so. A new suit, and for me? How fine and soft the cloth feels! Would you mind packing up the books on the table and the little traps around the room? Don't forget the pictures on the wall. That chubby youngster is yourself, boy. Yes, the face is blurred a little. It has been under my pillow many a night, and sometimes, boy, — you 'll not think me weak? — I 've cried a little over that and the other, when all the rest were asleep. Better leave that clumsy frame behind. It is a bungling thing, whittled out of odd bits of wood in spare hours. The rosettes in the trefoils on the border were put in on your birthdays, one a year. What! tears, boy, when it is all over and I am going out free, back to the pure air and grand distances of our mountain home!

"Lend me your arm, Robbie. A little slower, lad. My son, gentlemen! I leave you to-day. Kind remembrances to you all. Did she come up to the buildings, Robbie? Do you think the man will be slow with the keys? I see a brown gown through the grating. Faster, boy! I can walk best alone. Now God be praised — My wife!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"WE HAVE FOUND A MAN."

WINTER passed rapidly by with its fitful storms, succeeded by long intervals of calm and sunshine; for a California winter is like April in the Mississippi Valley, with swift alternations of cloudy and fair weather, presenting now and then prolonged, delusive spells of unbroken beauty, when the clear sky and still air beguile the unwary into a sense of fancied security. Spring arrived, — misnomer for the glad, triumphant California summer! — when all nature, after its season of vigorous upspringing and hardy growth, becomes radiant with bloom.

One Monday evening late in March a larger number than usual was mustered out for the regular weekly meeting at the Academy of Sciences. A rumor had been circulated, emanating from what source not even those who repeated it actually knew, that an important announcement would be made in regard to the representation of the government at a great foreign exposition. Many surmises had been made as to the identity of the fortunate individual upon whom the selection would fall, and everybody was interested and expectant. King, who gave himself little respite from the wearisome

duties of his profession, strolled into the building as the meeting was called to order, and leaning against a post near the doorway, surveyed the unique spectacle.

The rows of long benches were crowded with spectators, many of them ladies, whose gay apparel and elegant air contrasted forcibly with the dignified slouchiness of the old academy. The battered arm-chairs scattered about the place had been pressed into service, and occupied the space in front of the platform, anchored by portly figures, while many of the audience leaned against the tall book-cases or inelegantly perched themselves upon the terminal arms of the benches. The row of gas-jets along the base and rear of the overhanging gallery at the side and rear were lighted, and upon the platform two slender standards supported a couple of feeble burners. Even this modest attempt at illumination failed to dispel the gloom that pervaded the interior of the great building, and in each dim recess and distant corner lurked uncanny shadows, which frowned darkly upon the inoffensive spectators, or beckoned with long, mysterious fingers, as if they held weird secrets in their keeping.

The preliminaries of the meeting were no sooner concluded than the president advanced to the front of the platform, his fine face expressive of intense satisfaction as he spoke.

"Our friends, Messrs. Blake and Lindsley, from the Smithsonian Institution, have an interesting communication to make to-night. I can only ex-

press the hope that their action will be hailed by every one present with the same cordial approval that I am happy to bestow."

The sightly pair of ourang-outangs that flanked the platform, engaged in a desperate effort to climb a pair of slender saplings, grinned a toothsome welcome as the spokesman of the two gentlemen, a quiet-looking man of middle age, ascended the platform with the easy air and gait of a man of the world accustomed to public speaking, and for whom the sight of a strange audience holds no terrors. His oratory on this occasion was brief and unaffected, but it produced a profound sensation.

"You are all aware," he said, "of the object which brought my worthy colleague and myself to the coast this spring. A few months ago we were requested to select a worthy representative from among the scientific men of this State, who should act as the Commissioner of Metallurgy for the Pacific coast at the forthcoming World's Exposition at Singapore. After a careful consideration of the merits and capabilities of the different candidates suggested for the position, we have concluded that San Francisco can send no more worthy representative than Mr. Philip King, to whom we take pleasure in tendering the appointment."

People gazed at each other with startled faces. A few were mildly envious; a score were doubtful of the wisdom of the appointment; but the majority expressed a pleased surprise. Whispered comments, "It is well deserved," "He has earned it," flew from lip to lip.

From the rear of the hall a man advanced, and made his way up the crowded aisle. Upon his face was none of the glow of contest, for his features were deathly pale, and he walked heavily and unsteadily. The gentleman on the platform saw him coming, and passing half way down the steps, stood with outstretched hand, waiting to greet him. The people watching saw that the other did not perceive, or disregarded, the proffered courtesy, but leaned forward to whisper a few words in the speaker's ear.

"May I give my answer in writing?"

"Certainly," had been the wondering reply.

Philip King drew a note-book from his breast-pocket and penciled a few lines on a leaf, which he tore out and handed to the man on the platform. Then he turned, and treading the aisle as if his movements were clogged by an unseen ball and chain, looking neither to the right nor to the left, made his way back through the curious crowd and passed through the outer door, which shut with a dull clang behind him.

The man in whose hands he had placed the penciled lines studied them with a contracted brow. A hurried consultation took place on the platform. A complete hush reigned throughout the house as the president stepped to the front and read aloud from the slip of paper, his voice thrilling with deep feeling.

No post of honor in his country's service must ever be held by a man whose good name has been sullied. The honor you tender I must sorrowfully decline.

PHILIP KING.

Those who listened were deeply stirred. Many eyes were moist. Through the dry incrustation of scientific lore, penetrating the callousness of worldly indifference, thrusting aside pedantry, flippancy, and the iron rules of custom, the manly self-arraignment touched the hearts of the listeners.

The president remained standing before them in a reflective attitude. The house was so still that the rustle of the scrap of paper as he folded and unfolded it was distinctly heard. Then he broke the silence, speaking in his habitual tone, which, low and monotonous, had still a silvery cadence that exerted a magnetic influence upon his hearers.

"There are many among us, my friends, who have watched with painful interest the struggles of the man whose signature is attached to this bit of writing. We have seen him shunned by his friends, ostracized by society, making a brave fight for the right, against the worst obstacle that a man can encounter — the shadow of his own crime. Little by little we have witnessed his progress, until to-day there is not one of our number who may not be proud to take him by the hand. But we never knew his full measure until to-night. We have lost a worthy representative abroad, but we have found a man."

He pronounced the last words with a quiet intensity that sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout the audience. A storm of applause followed. San Franciscans must have an audible vent for their emotions, and many a heart-throb in response to some elevated sentiment finds expression in vigor-

ous striking of palm against palm, or the clatter of heavy boot-soles upon a polished floor. Some one cried : —

"Insist upon his acceptance!"

The Washington gentleman vetoed the suggestion.

"If I judge Mr. King correctly," he answered, "it would be useless to insist. He means what he says."

Meanwhile the hero of the evening, sitting dejectedly in a corner of one of the wharves, was sunk in gloomy self-communing. He had never in his life felt himself less a hero. Although he realized that he had done what by the public at large would be deemed a noble immolation of self upon the altar of his patriotism, conflicting doubts assailed him. He could not blind himself to the fact that he was making a very unwilling sacrifice. The satisfied conscience, the radiant glow of self-approval, popularly supposed to be the unfailing reward of a virtuous deed, were in his case totally lacking.

Worst of all, he felt that he had played the part of a fool in his deliberate renunciation of such a chance.

He became suddenly aware of a stealthy movement in his vicinity, as of some one cautiously approaching. An instant later and a man's figure was plainly visible, silhouetted against the dark gray of a lumber pile which left only a narrow path along the border of the pier. King sprang to his feet. There was no retreat from his position

save along the slender foothold over which the man was carefully making his way. Was he about to become the victim of a cowardly attack in that isolated spot, under cover of the darkness, or would the opportunity be offered him to take a cool plunge in the bay for the rescue of some unhappy devil who had selected the lonely place as a desirable point for taking leave of this world's cares?

"In faith, you 've silicted a ticklish place for a dark night's stroll, Mr. King," commented the newcomer, anxiously peering into the obscurity before him.

"What! you, Stubbs?" queried King, in amazement. "I thought you were" —

"Booked up yonder for life," said the intruder, coolly finishing the sentence as the other considerately paused. "And had n't ye heard the foine news, Master Phil? Oh, to be sure, polaytics is a grand thing, and more than one of the boys has raison to rejoice at the hard work he put in at the polls last fall. You see there 's a state election comin', an' the thavin' bummers know that I 've a little influ*ence* in the ward; so what does the rascals do but find a flaw in the indictment they had me up on, an' the case is remanded for a new trial. They put up the bail for me atween 'em. And railly you ought to go into polaytics yoursilf, Master Phil. You 've no notion of the fun it is to feel that you 're lendin' a hand in steerin' the old ship of state."

The light tone which Stubbs maintained was evidently assumed, and his hearer awaited with idle

curiosity the development of the purpose which had led the man to shadow his movements and follow him to this remote spot.

"I 'm thinkin', Mr. King," said Stubbs, shuffling uneasily about, so as to interpose his burly form between his uncommunicative friend and the water's edge, "it 's only a notion, you know, — that this here would be a very choice spot for a fellow who had got sort of knocked up, an' downright discouraged with life, an' felt as if he 'd like to cut the whole thing?"

The anxious note of interrogation with which he ended betrayed the tenor of his thoughts. King hastened to set his fears at rest.

"Provided he was enough of a coward for that kind of thing, Stubbs. A man would n't have much backbone who would show the white feather in that way."

The housebreaker was manifestly relieved, and he shifted his position from the somewhat perilous vantage ground he had assumed to foil an unexpected and desperate plunge on the part of his friend, to a less dangerous and more comfortable attitude on a projecting timber, which offered a secure if not luxurious seat. But his serenity was shortlived. An old apprehension returned with renewed force, oppressing his lively spirit and weighing him down with chill foreboding. Whatever his own frailties, he had always felt the need of a steadfast anchor. Here was the one man in whose honor and virtue he placed implicit faith. According to his peculiar code, men who had never

sinned were either hypocrites or greenhorns. The man before him had sinned and suffered and reformed. All of his own hopes of salvation were founded upon the possibilities open to him as exemplified in the life of Philip King. And here was his paragon of virtue, forsooth, stealing down to the water's edge, and sitting on a deserted pier at ten o'clock at night. It was plain that something had gone wrong. Was it possible that King was backsliding? Stubbs had enjoyed sufficient experience in the hands of astute lawyers to learn wary methods of procedure.

"I declare, Mr. King!" he began, cunningly, "it does seem a shame that me an' you should fall into such hard lines. Plinty of men just a-rollin' in wealth they 've got in anything but honest ways, an' us grubbin' away for to make a daycent livin', havin' to look on an' see other men dressed fit to kill, an' mayhap bein' without a respictible coat to our backs."

This was an adroit touch, for it occurred to the housebreaker that to a man like his friend, mortification of the appetite would be secondary to the humiliation of wearing homely and shabby garments. He assumed a tone of weak virtue as he went on.

"I assure you, Master Phil, as I had hard work to turn off Bobby the Rattler when he come to me two nights back, and tells me of how one of the rich railroad men is off to the ould country, and nobody but the housekeeper an' the butler in the house, an' the butler an acquaintance of his in

Portland prison, that would niver blow on him for fear he 'd give him away, an' piles of plate packed in a safe that any fellow that knew his A B C's could go through in a jiffy. More than enough to help a gang of men out of the country, and set 'em up in a good square business."

He paused to draw breath, being quite carried away for the time by the scheme he had unfolded, and King seized upon the occasion to read his self-appointed ward a severe lecture upon the folly and sin of listening to the temptations held out by his old companions.

"An' you railly would n't be after layin' a finger to a penny that was n't honestly earned, no matter how foine the chances for makin' off, with niver a suspicion your hand was in the pie?" eagerly inquired his auditor.

"To be sure not, Stubbs. What nonsense have you got into your head now?" asked King, indignantly.

But Stubbs's temper had risen in proportion with his failure to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion regarding the erratic movements of the man whom fate had given to him as a friend, and he blazed out upon him with righteous resentment.

"Indade an' it 's all very well, Mr. King, for you to git after a poor fellow in this way, but how will you be explainin' the shines you 're cuttin' this night yoursilf? Truly a foine way of spendin' the avenin', to be trampin' about a rotten old wharf as full of holes as a worn-out sieve, an' causin' a man to a'most worry his life out for fear you 'll jump afore he can lay hold on you."

King laughed a little impatiently. His heart was too full of bitterness to appreciate the full humor of the situation, as he might have done at a different time. It was evident some explanation must be accorded his troublesome friend. He entered reluctantly upon the task.

"I doubt if I can make you understand, Stubbs. To-night I received an appointment to go abroad. There is to be a great fair in a city of China, and a number of men will go from the United States, to represent different branches of science. I have been making a specialty of examining ores by what we call microscopical analysis. A series of articles I wrote for a scientific paper attracted attention, and some people conceived the idea of sending me as one of the commissioners."

"By jolly!" Stubbs interjected, unable longer to repress his excitement and gratification. "Sure our farchune 's made now, Mr. King. An' you 'll take me along as your private sicritary, won't you, now? On my faith, I was jist agoin' to turn a new leaf. I 'll niver lay my hand to so much as a tayspoon till we get back to Californy again."

"But you do not understand, Stubbs. I declined."

"What 's that you say, Mr. King? Give such a chance as that the go-by? Faith it 'd be the makin' of us both! Surely you 're jokin', or may be you think I 'll not reflict cridit on the business. But I 'll stake my head I 'm in arnest this time. Indade I am. An' if you doubt my word, I 'll bring up Bobby the Rattler himself to tell how near I came

to kickin' him out of his thavin' notions. 'Now look a' here, Bobby,' says I, 'don't you come round me with your palaver,' I says, 'for I 've got a good place an' good grub, an' I 'll not have any more of that maggotty beef up to San Quentin in mine this three months!' " insisted Stubbs, with such an air of virtuous indignation at the thought of going back to prison diet within the length of time he stipulated, that King indulged in a broad smile under cover of the darkness.

"Indeed, Stubbs, you are adrift in your calculations. It was purely on my own account that I refused the appointment. I did n't regard myself as a fit man for the place," he continued, in despair at ever making the good-natured rascal appreciate the motives which had prompted him, but feeling that he must bring the discussion to an end.

"Tush! tush! it 's the wildest folly you 're talkin'! Not a fit man for the place, indade! An' barrin' a little mistake made years agone, what 's to unfit you? An' truly such delicacy puts the whole Chinayse empire to shame, whin, as iverybody knows, the old haythen at the consilate has five wives in his sweet, and a score more at home that he 's talkin' of bringin' over to assist in his New Year's receptions an' tan games, an' the Lord knows what 's goin' on at his house from mornin' till night." In his angry eloquence Stubbs did not hesitate to draw somewhat upon his imagination, although correct as to the main facts.

"You may as well let up, old fellow. It 's all cut and dried." They were picking their way back over the rotten planking.

"Could n't get it agin if you tried?" anxiously queried the cracksman.

"I shall not try. They have probably put another man in my place already." King swallowed a sigh as he gave expression to the conviction. There was a long pause in the conversation. They threaded their way through narrow driveways and along streets so filled with obstructions, in defiance of the law, that pedestrianism was fraught with perils even by the broad light of day. As they parted to go their separate ways Stubbs extended his hand, as if moved by an unaccountable impulse, and spoke in a grave tone that King remembered hearing him use but once before.

"Good-night, Mr. King. You may think I can't understand; but I niver sized you up rightly before."

With a stout squeeze of the hand he held, he disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE RECEIVING HOSPITAL.

EARLY one forenoon, as King entered his office, the telephone bell tinkled sharply, as if the manipulator had grown weary of ringing an oft-repeated and unanswered summons. He stepped to the instrument, and an impatient voice hailed him.

"That you, No. 1956? King, assayer?"

"Yes. What's wanted?"

"Come down to City Receiving Hospital. Man killed there — wants to see you. Been trying to ring you up for an hour!"

Obeying this somewhat ambiguous summons from the world of shadows, King caught up his hat and walked briskly in the direction of the Old City Hall.

It was yet early morning, and the great tide of men of business and women of leisure, with whom the streets are thronged a little later in the day, had not yet found its way along Kearny Street, which was comparatively deserted. Remnants of the fog of the previous night hung about the western hills, and brooded over the bay, while the keen trade wind came in short, fitful gusts, gathering strength for a steady blow.

The assayer slackened his pace as he neared the

huge, fungus-like excrescence of brick standing opposite the open plaza, whose tidily kept walks were lined with stately trees, in whose boughs birds caroled as merrily as if they had their homes in honest country air rather than that plague-stricken spot, surrounded on three sides by as many foul phases of criminal life. To King, who had hitherto instinctively avoided this quarter, the place was like a nightmare of a buried past. It was there, more than fourteen years gone by, that he had lain night after night in a noisome underground cell, and listened to the blasphemous shouts and vile imprecations of the miserable wretches about him. Even there, in that Augean stable, reeking with vile odors, saturated with crime, his delicately bred mother had found her way to strengthen and console him.

Almost unconsciously he lifted his hat from his head as he entered the place consecrated to him by her memory. The prison officials were startled out of their accustomed stern demeanor by this unusual token of respect, and forgot their authoritative manner so far as to become exceptionally communicative.

"No. 27? Here it is: 'Young woman found on the streets in an unconscious condition. Face bruised, and one eye most gouged out; when she came to, said her husband kicked her out of the house. Name Annie Gaffney. Hard case! Served a term of six months in the House of Correction once before for the same offense.' No, that's 37. Here you are! '27: Notorious outlaw and house-

breaker, Jack Williams, alias Red-headed Mike, alias Michael Stubbs. Wanted for burglary of warehouse on Front Street the 17th. Detected by Officer Malony, at five o'clock this morning, prowling round First and Tehama streets. Resisted arrest. Shot through the left lung. Says he was trying to see his mother. Inward hemorrhage. Gone up.' Friend of yours, eh?"

King gravely assented.

"All right. Here's somebody just going in!"

It was the police editor of the "Daily Gong," a bright-eyed, alert young man, with the peculiar grim record about eyes and mouth which tells of a large experience concentrated into a few years of life. A certain ingenuous, inquisitive expression that his face had worn in the early days of his professional career had disappeared, but King recognized in this pushing man of the world the impertinent but good-natured young journalist who had interviewed him at San Quentin. If there was any corresponding recognition on the part of the reporter, he did not reveal it by word or sign, but pushed on with nervous haste to the hospital. There was a row up town to be inquired into before noon, and a whole docket of petty cases to be checked off that day.

As they entered the room where he lay, it was evident that the good spirits of the dying man had not deserted him, for a loud burst of laughter greeted some sally he had just made. Lying propped up on pillows, his pallid face and sunken eyes told that the worthless life was ebbing fast,

but he looked up to King with a grateful smile, and stretching out his hand, met the other's in a close, long grasp.

As he gazed at the reporter a sense of recognition seemed slowly to dawn upon him, and he beckoned the journalist to the side of his pallet.

"Look here, young man. D'ye remimber puttin' a question to me up yonder, some ten years ago?" jerking his thumb to the northward. "I give you a heap of lip then, for I'd no intintion of lettin' you quiz me for the sake of the fun it was to you an' the payple that rade your paper. I'm ready to give you your answer now; an' mark you, it's none the worrse for ten years kapin' or bein' from the lips of a man who's come to the end of a hard life. You was after knowin' what made me the low-down cuss I was — shut up like a wild baste for to amuse you. That's right. Git out your note-book an' chalk it down, an' print it in big letters, that ivery one may read it. I am a crayditable graduate of the San Francisco Industrial School, the most flourishin' hotbed of sin the devil iver tended, an' the most accursed establishment that iver disgraced this city."

Stubbs paused as if for breath, and the hospital surgeon, scandalized by this outrageous calumny upon one of San Francisco's most revered institutions, hastily interposed and warned him that every word he spoke was shortening his life.

"An' what if it be?" returned Stubbs, in a jocular tone. "Surely, doctor, you'd not be havin' the heart to deprive a man of lavin' a partin'

blessin' for his foster mother, now would ye? An' doctor, dear," assuming a wheedling air, "plase be so kind as to suggist to the Board of Supervisors that they take me for a starter, and grub up a lot of poor fellows fillin' robbers' an' murderers' and suicides' graves in Potter's Field out to Lone Mountain, an' run up a nate marrble shaft above us, with somethin' like this upon it!" running his fingers along the bed covering, as if tracing an inscription.

"HERE REST

SOME SHINING EXAMPLES

OF THE WORK OF THE

SAN FRANCISCO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

There 's a score or two fellows in the stone-yards at San Quentin and Folsom prisons — long apprentices at their trade — who 'll cut the words free of charge, an' be delighted at the chance of payin' such a compliment to the nursery where they were bred. Mr. King, would you mind standin' around where I can see you — there, where the light falls full on your face."

The man's whole expression had softened and changed as he addressed King, and he looked long and earnestly upon the countenance of his friend. His head moved uneasily upon the pillows, as if to conceal the moisture which sprang unbidden to his eyes, and his voice grew weak with a pain not wholly physical, as he continued, —

"If I 'd only met a man like you earlier in life, Master Phil, I 'd ha' been a different fellow. You 've

always brought out the best there was in me. I've been bad enough. God knows there's little good to look back on, but I think I know a good man whin I see him."

Some of those about him, hearing him address King in this manner, thought his mind was giving way, and a popular clergyman, who had been shriving a condemned criminal in a cell near by, approached the bedside. Stubbs waved him off with a motion of his hand.

"I hope you'll not be after takin' offinse, sir, but whin a man's dyin' after a life like mine, it seems a cheeky thing to expict the Almighty to hold out a helpin' hand. A man must be near to Him to ask it, an' have a white soul. I think if Christ himself had sinned an' been sorry, he'd come a hape nearer some of us poor fellows. If you'd let Mr. King, sir, — and — he'd be willin'" —

A strange hush reigned throughout the room as Philip King came quietly forward, and, in the simple, direct language of a man unused to spoken prayer, commended the dying man to the love and pity of his Maker. Many eyes grew dim that had long been strangers to tears. A prison trusty, standing in the hall outside the door, brushed his sleeve over his eyes. The reporter hurriedly withdrew. Stubbs's face had grown calm and composed, but he lifted himself with an effort from the pillow as the door swung open, and a woman tottered to his bedside and sank on her knees beside it.

Only a little, bowed old woman, her homely, wrinkled face framed in an ancient bonnet with

tawdry trimmings, her large hands callous with toil, but in her faded eyes beamed true mother love, as she clasped in her own the hands that were fast growing cold, pressing them to her lips, while she called him her dear boy, her poor, suffering lad.

"Why, mother!"

The voice was a whisper now, but his hand sought her face caressingly, and his lips parted in a half articulate murmur. King, bending forward, caught the words, —

"Turn — a new — leaf this — time."

And then all was still.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MAN JIM.

ANNIE ELLIS stood before the glass in her room one morning, tying on her bonnet. Irrespective of the charming picture it framed, it was a very pretty glass — a large square of French plate, clear as crystal, with a broad bevel at the edge, and set in polished prima vera.

And it was a very pretty bonnet; the fanciful creation of a Kearny Street milliner, which had arrived in a big box the night before, and was now making its first acquaintance with its mistress by daylight. It was a quaint little affair of Normandy straw, with a decisive individuality of its own; and it had a soft satin facing around the front, a jaunty blue bow on the crown, and sprays of absurd blue morning-glories that were not so blue as the young girl's eyes, and a saucy little peak in the middle of the brim that suited the piquant face beneath, and long ties of broad azure ribbon, which hung pendent from the sides.

Now everybody knows that bonnet-ties should be possessed of an amiable spirit, that they may dwell in harmony together, and permit their wearers to enjoy a sense of peace and self-approval. But Miss Annie's bonnet strings were refractory, and at the

opening of our chapter she had been for a good quarter of an hour engaged in a desperate effort to reduce them to a state of proper submission, and form them into a becoming bow under her dimpled chin.

The ribbons were obstinate, limp where they should be stiff, and stiff where they should be pliable; twisting at the side of her cheek, and turning their lack-lustre surface uppermost as she gathered them into loops in her plump little hands; refusing to be drawn through the knot, and finally slipping through, ends and all; gathering in lop-sided bows that assumed uncomely curves and left pendent ends of absurd disproportion, and altogether conducting themselves in anything but a decorous manner.

Although tears of vexation stood in her eyes, the young girl was not to be discomfited. By dint of patient coaxing and pulling and pinching and smoothing, and a series of little jerks, she at length vanquished the unruly strings and settled them into their proper places.

She surveyed the figure in the glass with smiling satisfaction, perking her small head first to one side and then to the other, subjecting the bonnet to a searching and critical inspection, giving the huge bow on the crown a loving pat, bending the wiry stem until the flowers assumed a more ravishing aspect, twitching the fringe of fluffy curls that hung like a wicked little curtain over the fair purity of her forehead, and finally standing perfectly still and gazing steadily before her.

It was a very pretty face that the glass reflected. Any one who could have looked upon the fair young girl and her smiling semblance in the mirror would have been ready to declare that her whole soul was in her bonnet. The thought came to the girl herself, as she leaned forward with parted lips and the bright color won by her hot contest of the moment before still lingering in her cheeks; but she smiled back a mocking defiance at the sober accusation of the face in the mirror, and, with one last vain glance at her counterpart, snatched up her parasol and gloves and ran quickly from the room.

A carriage was waiting at the door below, and on the walk the coachman was standing, an ascetic-looking man of middle age, secretly much elated over the bravery of his olive suit and the gilt cockade in his hat. This dignified subaltern had a convenient cast in his optical organs which enabled him to successfully accomplish the difficult feat of keeping one eye on the horses and the other on the gay new bonnet. He held open the carriage door while the young lady stepped in, and then awaited orders.

"To the works, Aleck," said the young lady, with decision.

The man was inwardly dismayed, but he could not dispute the young girl's directions. Queer taste, to be forever racing down to that smutty building! he soliloquized, as he mounted the box, wrapped a gay robe tightly around his legs, gathered the lines into his hands, sitting stiff and erect, to the admiration and awe of all the street gamins

in the neighborhood. California girls were beyond his comprehension, fixing themselves up fit for a party, to go down to a dirty factory, where the smoke and soot in the air took all the polish off the mountings of the harness, when there was the park, with its line of aristocratic riders, and Kearny and Market streets, thronged with people who were all eyes for a really stylish turnout, and paid due homage to a handsome article of dress when they saw it. And he looked over his shoulder at the bonnet with a sense of personal grievance.

"Is uncle in?"

Miss Annie swept through the suite of offices, and stood at the superintendent's desk. The occupant, a tall young man with a full blonde beard and a serious expression of countenance, looked cynically at the radiant figure, so out of all keeping with the dingy surroundings.

"He will not be here until eleven. You know that is his regular hour."

"How stupid of me not to remember! What shall I do? It is only half-past ten."

She had drawn out a small gold watch of elegant workmanship as she spoke, and looked up at the tall fellow with an air of helpless appeal; but he came to her relief with no suggestion.

"You are very hospitable. Won't you offer me a chair?"

"Certainly." He walked quietly across the room, and placed a chair beside her. But the girl still remained standing.

"Enforced courtesy is a little worse than no

courtesy at all," she commented, and a touch of bitterness crept into her tone. "I will only accept it if you will make amends by leaving your tiresome old books and sitting down to entertain me."

"I am very sorry if I was remiss in attention, Miss Annie. You know I am no drawing-room gallant, but only a plain workingman. I cannot neglect my duty," and he coolly resumed his place at the desk.

Moved by a fierce desire for revenge, she swept through the room and laid her hand on the knob of another door, looking back as if expecting him to protest against her action. He did not appear to have observed her movement, and was busily figuring with a pencil on a scrap of paper. The girl slyly opened the door and slipped through, closing it noiselessly after her.

The door led into the works. The din and roar of ponderous machinery filled the air. Back and forth between heavy wheels and whirling shafts, hauling great trucks or laden with heavy implements, scores of men were moving, their blackened faces and horny hands proclaiming the coarse nature of their toil. Many of them cast admiring glances toward the lovely girl, who stood like some radiant vision on the steps leading from the office, uncertain whether to retreat or descend into their midst. One, a submissive looking man of middle age, who had just entered from a neighboring apartment, bearing a heavy bar of iron on his shoulder, stopped short, and stared at her with deep yearning in his heart, until recalled to a sense

of his folly by the sharp reminder of a fellow-laborer who came up behind him in the narrow passage.

Miss Annie was unconscious of all these things. Tears of vexation were in her eyes, and she smarted at the recollection of her experience in the office. He had not so much as noticed her bonnet. And why should she care for his approbation? What was he, anyhow, but a common workman, who owed his advancement to her uncle's kindness. She resolved not to go back to the office until the hour came for her uncle's arrival, but to stroll about among the machinery and look into the furnaces, as she recollected doing in her childhood, clinging to her guardian's hand.

She sauntered along with an easy and collected air, her hidden spirit of defiance lending unusual dignity to her step and a dangerous sparkle to her eye. Those of the men upon whom she bestowed a careless nod or smile were at once exalted to the seventh heaven.

She had gone but a few paces when her progress was arrested. Advancing along the narrow path came the man known as Jim, a heavy bar on his shoulder and an eager light in his face. She recognized him as soon as she met his glance, recalling his singular action at the house, and her heart softened at the thought of the little girl he had lost, while she smiled gently as she stepped back to make room for him to pass.

A tall shaft at the side had been awaiting its opportunity. As the girl stepped backward the skirt

of her dress was sucked into the faint current of air stirring about the base of the swiftly revolving column, waved back as if repelled, then slowly approached the tempter, and in a moment more was swept into the greedy vortex.

The man Jim turned and saw the swirling fabric, and the girl's frantic movement to escape, and caught her in his arms, bracing his foot against a projecting point. The mighty shaft, wroth at the prospect of losing its prey, strove to gather them both into its embrace. They were drawn close to the shining steel, when the man gathered all his strength into one mighty effort, there was a sound of a thin fabric rent and torn, and the girl was free.

The workman who had rescued her did not fare so well. In his struggle to save her, the loose blouse which he wore approached too near to the spinning column. He gave a stout wrench to get free, but the garment was of sterner stuff than the girl's light costume, and Annie Ellis, leaning back sick and faint at the knowledge of the terrible peril she had escaped, was appalled to see that the treacherous shaft had secured another victim.

Then it was that her wild cry for help rang out upon the air. Jack Benchley, the superintendent, leaning his elbow upon the desk after his visitor's unceremonious leave, and gazing after her with a preoccupied air, flung open the door and took in the situation at a glance. It was the work of an instant for him to spring upon the framework and throw off the clutch of the gear that drove the

shaft. Then he leaped to the floor and hastened to the scene of the tragedy, already surrounded by a throng of excited workmen.

As Annie Ellis stared, horror-stricken, at the terrible sight before her, there was a sudden cessation of noise throughout the huge building; the great shaft revolved more slowly, and the bruised and mangled form of what the moment before had been a man of vigorous frame was flung senseless at her feet.

San Francisco girls do not faint at the sight of blood or in the presence of danger. The young girl seated herself for an instant on a heavy casting, her face very white and her teeth firmly set. Then she rose with nerves like iron.

"Lay him down here — so, boys. Handle his arm carefully. Don't you see the blood gush from that artery? Now, off for a surgeon! Riehl is the nearest — Natoma Street, near Second. If he is n't in, bring the German apothecary at the corner. Something must be done at once to stop this flow of blood. Give me your handkerchiefs."

She was down on her knees on the hard-trodden earth as she gave the orders, indifferent to the ruddy pool that formed on the ground at her side, soaking her pretty blue skirt with a crimson stain.

The loops of bright ribbon knotted beneath her chin were in her way, and she loosened them with a touch of her fingers, and snatching the dainty bonnet from her head, flung it recklessly behind her, where it caught in the machinery and gathered stains of oil and dirt. Moved as the workmen were

by the awful accident that had befallen their comrade, this incident impressed them even more deeply, and they gazed, awestricken, after the pretty headgear, feeling themselves parties to an act of wanton desecration, until one of them stealthily retired and rescued it from its unhappy plight, laying it reverently on a bench near by.

The girl made an ineffectual attempt to stanch the bleeding artery with the grimy squares of linen flung down at her command. She knew nothing of the virtues of tourniquets or ligatures, but observing that the main flow of blood was from a point a little above the wrist, she took her own thin handkerchief, and folding it into the smallest compass, pressed it firmly into the deep wound where the gaping radial artery was discharging the life blood of the wounded man, and held it there with her own hand.

Once she looked up with quivering lips.

"Some one go for Uncle Andrew. Tell him how it happened."

News of the disaster had quickly reached the office, and the men hastily left their desks and flocked into the machine-room, but none attempted to disturb the young girl, who held her place as if by some divine right. Some thought dubiously of the reputation this accident would establish for the works, and one looked dark as he pondered the possibilities of a heavy suit for damages. The superintendent, who had known Annie Ellis from early childhood, and had been wont to consider her a petulant, exacting child, stared at her as if he had received a new revelation.

The surgeon came and made a hasty examination, taking some needful precautions to check the hemorrhage from the wound before the patient could be lifted to a broad bench, where a tedious and complicated operation was to be performed. The young girl, whose services were no longer needful, passed on to the office and sat down with her hands tightly clasped together, sharing in imagination each cut through the quivering flesh, the torture of delicate nerves laid bare, the shock of the toothed saw as it severed the splintered bones. Blaming herself for the idle fancy that had led her to the spot, for her stupid indifference to the power of the ponderous machinery, wondering if her recklessness had cost a human life, she looked up like some remorseful and sorrow-laden wraith when the surgeon entered the office, attended by her uncle, her brother, the superintendent, and another man, Philip King. They were discussing the merits of different hospitals. King and the boy alone took no part in the conversation.

"I should advise the German hospital, if it were not for the distance," said the doctor. "The man is weak from loss of blood, and it will not do to move him far."

The young girl sprang to her feet with a quick flash of indignation.

"A hospital! Uncle, how can you think of such a thing!"

"You don't know what you are talking about, Annie," Murphy soberly responded. "They give the best of care in the hospitals. I will see that he has everything needful."

"Uncle Andrew, he saved my life."

The owner of the works looked from the girl to the young man, whose indignant face repeated her protest, and as he viewed them his look of stubborn resolution gave way.

"Doctor," — the young girl laid her hand on the surgeon's arm, — "is there any danger? Do you think it possible he — will not live?"

"I cannot say, my dear. The shock to the system and the loss of blood induce a state of the lowest vitality. The least little thing — a habit of thought, a mere trick of temperament — often turns the balance in such a case. Do you know the fellow?" addressing the superintendent. "Is he a man of cheerful disposition?"

Murphy drew Philip King through the door into the next room. His aggressive and self-sufficient air had wholly disappeared, and he spoke in a husky whisper.

"See that he is taken over there, King — to my house. You go with them. And, King, you — you tell them. I can't."

An easy conveyance was procured, and the injured man, still breathing stertorously under the influence of chloroform, was taken to the comfortable home on Harrison Street, only a few blocks distant. Under the physician's directions he was placed on a soft bed in a sunny room, and everything possible arranged for his comfort. The surgeon sat down by the bedside to await the patient's return to consciousness.

King ascertained that nothing more could be

done for a season, then beckoned Tom Ellis and his sister into the adjoining room and shut the door. The young people viewed his action with surprise.

"I have a story to tell you," he began, briefly.

"A story, Mr. King? How very opportune. I am fond of stories. I hope it will be fascinating enough to take my mind for a moment from this dreadful accident. I cannot put it from my thoughts."

The girl had exchanged her torn and blood-stained lawn for a pretty white wrapper, and sank into a low chair as she spoke. One who observed her languid action or childish tone would have found it difficult to credit that she was the same brave little woman who had faced a frightful accident without quailing a couple of hours before, and afterwards demonstrated in the most practical fashion the depth of gratitude she held for her preserver.

"It is not a cheerful story, Miss Ellis, and the dénouement is not in my hands;" and King wished that he were endowed with sufficient eloquence to tell the story as it should be told.

The younger man leaned forward and looked the speaker sharply in the face. The girl folded her hands, and assumed a graceful listening posture as King began his narrative.

"One of the first men I observed when I went to San Quentin — you know that part of my history, Miss Ellis?"

The young lady responded with a slight nod.

"One of the first men I observed was a quiet,

middle-aged man in convict's dress, who seemed to me the saddest being in that whole cheerless, sullen crowd. It does not take long to single out the few prisoners a man of decent habits can approach without contamination in a living hell like a state penitentiary. You need not raise your eyebrows, Miss Ellis. A man learns to speak in unvarnished terms of such breeding-houses of evil, and it would be better if Christian people would call them by their proper names. But to return to this man. It will be more convenient to speak of him by name, and I may as well call him John Carew. Any name will do for a jail-bird, you know. He was a man of singularly inoffensive disposition, liked and respected by the officers because of his strict submission to prison rules, his uniform courtesy, and his pure language — the rarest of characteristics among convicts, I assure you. When I came to know him better, my respect and sympathy for him increased. He had been a hardworking mechanic in this city, fond of his home, and of steady habits. One evening he was persuaded by a friend to attend a grand political celebration. The excitement ran high; you know what such an event means in San Francisco. The crowd cheered themselves hoarse, took a drink, and cheered again. Carew was not accustomed to drink, and the liquor flew to his head. There was an angry altercation, in which his friend joined. Carew, wild with liquor, seized a heavy glass that stood on the bar, and hurled it across the room. It struck his friend on the head and fractured his skull. Carew was promptly tried and

convicted, and was sent to the penitentiary for twenty years.

"He never questioned the justice of his sentence. I don't think I ever saw a man more truly penitent, more unsparing in his self-condemnation. If the sacrifice of his own life would have brought back his dead friend, he would have gladly resigned it. His last act after his arrest and before the verdict came, which he foresaw would deprive him of his civil rights, was to deed half of his little property to the widow of the man he killed. The rest he left to his wife and children."

"Poor fellow! Then he had a family?" exclaimed the girl.

"His wife died soon after. He never tired of talking of his two children, recalling their baby tricks and sayings, and the love they had cherished for him; wondering if they had quite forgotten him as the years rolled on and he received no message from them; hoping against hope that some lucky accident would procure his release before the expiration of his sentence, that he might have the privilege of contributing to their support and education. But the happy chances that came to less worthy men never came to him. No new administration took notice of his consistent behavior, no fortunate opportunity offered to demonstrate his devotion to the State. Once he wiped out four years' credits by resenting a turnkey's brutal treatment of a child whose face reminded him of his boy's."

"He had good stuff!" was Tom Ellis's laconic comment.

"At last, after sixteen years' confinement, he passed the gates for the last time. He came down to the city, and his first visit was to me."

"But his children. Had they died or gone away?"

Annie Ellis leaned forward in her chair as she asked the question, her eyes tender with sympathy.

"He learned that day, for the first time, that they did not know of his existence. They were comfortably situated, contented, happy. The alternative was offered to him of breaking in with a rude shock upon their peaceful lives, or of dropping quietly out of sight. He was an unselfish man, and he chose the latter."

"But how could you let him, Mr. King?" The young girl's voice was pathetic in its intonations of grief and sympathy. "Had his children no rights? I tell you that Tom and I have been orphaned, and we know the emptiness of feeling that in all the world there is no one who belongs to us — to us alone; no one to whom our interests are first. Do you think they would not have been happy to comfort his lonely life, to share his trials and deprivations?"

She was interrupted by her brother, who had listened to the tale with constantly increasing excitement. He took three strides across the room, and seized the speaker roughly by the arm.

"Why are you telling this to us, Mr. King? Do you know that our father died when Annie was a baby?" he demanded.

"I know that he is living, after expiating his

sin ; know that he had settled down to a life of humble toil and self-renunciation; know that he saved his daughter's life to day, at the risk of his own ; know that he lies in the next room " —

He ceased abruptly because he no longer had an audience. Swiftly and silently Annie Ellis flitted from the room, and her brother followed.

James Ellis awoke from his stupor to find himself on a soft bed in a dainty room, its walls hung with a pale-blue paper where morning glories ran riot. Subtle perfumes were in the air, choice specimens of bric-à-brac were ranged on brackets and in tiny cabinets, and about him were the countless accessories of a young girl's toilet. A little blue bonnet, limp and draggled and stained, as if it had been through some harrowing experience, arrested his eye, and he gazed upon it in bewilderment, recalling the events of the morning in a misty and unreal way. He thought he was in dreamland, and closed his eyes for fear the sweet fancy might fade, but opened them wide as he heard the rustle of a woman's garments and the sound of a girl's tremulous voice.

" Father ! my father ! "

Kisses on his grimy face and colorless lips, and on his injured arm ; a soft cheek pressed against his own, and tears bedewing his face like a heaven-sent rain, refreshing his parched soul, while in his inmost heart reverberated the sweet accents of a young voice pronouncing that long-forgotten name.

" Father, dear, did you think that we had no room for you in our hearts ? that we could be happy and

content if we had known you were toiling sad and lonely, needing our love, and the dear home-life? You must get well for our sakes, dear father. There is something to live for still."

Tom Ellis stood beside the bed, saying nothing, but clasped the sufferer's unhurt hand with an eloquent pressure, and his fine eyes were fixed on his father's face.

The surgeon — who had been defied, swept from his post and ignored — beheld with consternation the quick wave of excitement that passed over the face of his patient. His apprehensions subsided as he saw the look of perfect peace that succeeded.

"I think we can be spared now," he said to King. "My patient is in good hands. I shall have no more anxiety on his account."

As Philip King left the house he encountered Murphy, who had been strolling up and down the walks, diligently smoking. He flung the stump of his cigar into a geranium hedge, whence it sent up a delicate spiral of smoke.

"Well?" There was unfeigned anxiety in the exclamation.

"It is all right, Mr. Murphy."

They walked slowly along the broad path, bordered with abalone shells that reflected the sunlight in prismatic tints.

"Do you think they will blame me, King?"

"No fear of that. You acted for their good. They will understand."

"I'll go down with you, King."

They signalled a passing car and journeyed cityward.

A strange weight seemed to oppress Murphy's mind, manifesting itself in a nervous haste as they mounted the granite steps leading to the block where their offices were situated, only to see the elevator disappearing from sight with a full load of passengers. Under normal circumstances Murphy would have waited a quarter of an hour rather than climb the three flights of stairs leading to the upper floor, but he undertook the ascent without ceremony. Panting and puffing, he reached the summit and halted at the assayer's door.

"King!"

"Yes, Mr. Murphy."

"Since you told me what you did a few months ago — when Ellis first turned up, you know — I 've taken some pains to inquire into matters. You know I 'm your friend, and I hope you won't be offended at what I say. There 's one thing hurts you like thunder in the public esteem. If it was n't for that you 'd have twenty friends where you have one now. Take my advice, and make a clean breast about that missing fifteen thousand."

CHAPTER XXVI.

BEFORE DEATH'S TRIBUNAL.

It was nearly midnight of the day of the accident at the foundry before King sought his room, and his brain was so overwrought by the events of the day that he did not retire at once, but stood long at his window, looking out over the bay. The scene was like some dreamy painting of Moran's. The full moon flung a silvery path over the placid water, tall ships rocked lightly upon its bosom, and on the farther shore the Contra Costa range could be seen in mystical outline.

Standing there, he became conscious of a sudden commotion in the cottage below, and perceived lights moving to and fro. A few minutes later his landlady rapped softly on his door.

"Mr. King, the little boy in the cottage is very ill. The mother is all alone. If you would be so kind" —

He waited no further bidding, but hastened to the troubled mother's aid. The child was in a suffocative spasm, where each breath threatened to be his last. Such emergencies wait for no physician. King aided the two women in applying the simple but homely remedies which are efficacious in such cases, and was rewarded with a look of grateful rec-

ognition from the little sufferer, as he finally found relief. Even then the thread of life seemed to be held by so slight a tenure that, obeying the mother's appealing eyes rather than her spoken words, the young man started at once in quest of a physician.

Dr. Selby, whose yellowed diploma proclaimed him a graduate of the allopathic school, was a man whose scorn of drugs was so vigorous and outspoken, and who adhered so closely to nature's own methods of healing, that he might well have been called a medical agnostic. He possessed the idiosyncrasy of regarding his profession less as a means of pecuniary profit than as a work of humanity, and the consciousness of his worldly prosperity or the exemption of his advancing years did not prevent his rising promptly in compliance with King's peremptory call, and making a hasty toilet at five o'clock in the morning. King had known the doctor from his boyhood, and as they proceeded to their destination the physician listened to the young man's account of the child's illness with silent attention.

"Philip!" he said, abruptly, as the latter concluded his statement, "why don't you marry her?"

"Marry whom?" returned King, confounded by the sudden utterance and singular character of the demand.

"This woman. The mother of your child."

"Dr. Selby, you were never more mistaken in your life."

"I don't wish to force my advice upon you, Philip," pursued the doctor, calmly, unmoved by

this denial. "It is very possible you do not know how the report of such a thing travels, or the harm it is doing you. The only way you can put yourself square with the world and with your own conscience is by marrying her."

They had labored up the hill and reached the foot of the steps that led to the old-fashioned abode. King held the gate open for the doctor to pass through, pondering meanwhile the annoying suggestion that had come upon him so unexpectedly. As he considered the circumstances on which the report was based, he recognized the utter futility of contradicting it.

"I won't ask you to trust my word, doctor," he said, quietly, "but I will ask you to suspend your judgment for the present."

The physician viewed him searchingly. The words had the ring of sincerity. King had always seemed to him a curious compound, and the complex influences of his career had served to increase the mystery of his character. What other man of his acquaintance would have answered such a charge so dispassionately, whether it were true or false? And what other man would be capable of deliberately placing himself in such compromising circumstances?

A moment later all personal questions were merged into grave professional considerations. He bent over the sick child, felt its pulse, and made a brief but thorough examination. When he lifted his face his eyes told the story his lips would fain have withheld. A mild childish affection which

had been hanging over the boy for the past week had taken a sudden and fatal turn. He could not live till sundown.

The stricken mother bent over the little sufferer with a look of woe pitiful to see. The younger child, awakened from her sleep by the unusual light and movement, and unconscious of the tragedy that was transpiring, prattled joyously among her toys on the floor. A caged bird sang a merry roundelay to the rising sun in the next room. The perfume of the honeysuckle drifted in through the open window. Sunshine and bloom and fragrance and happy laughter filled the air, and within the room the pall of darkness was falling, and a young life slowly and surely going out with the coming of the day.

The child died at noon, in the arms of the one who loved him best, passing away so gently and peacefully that only the mother's wail of anguish as the chord that bound his life to her own was rent in twain told that the light had faded from the beautiful eyes, and the bright young spirit vanished from earth for evermore.

King, who had remained a silent but faithful watcher, extended his arms to receive the little form, and laid it gently upon the white coverlet of the bed, moved by a sorrow second only to the mother's. By his gentle childish arts the little one had won his heart and become a dear and essential part of his own existence, shining into his lonely life like a sunbeam, nor relinquishing his sovereignty when the little sister had come, with her winsome baby

ways, to dispute dominion with him. In the course of his life King had faced death in many forms. He had seen strong men stricken down in the pride of manhood, waging a losing fight with the destroyer, to be at length torn from the helpless families dependent upon them, resisting to the last; he had seen sin-blasted lives go out, rebellious and unreconciled, crying out for the one more chance which might prove their moral salvation; he had seen the old, the feeble, and the faint-hearted, gladly loosing their hold upon existence and floating off, unrepining, into the great unknown; he had seen his own mother, weary with life's struggles, lying cold and still in her coffin, unresponsive to his heart's bitter cry. But he had never witnessed so tragical a sight as that which lay before him. Could this be the beautiful boy, but the day before crowned with the royalty of a noble childhood, the seal of a pure and lofty nature stamped upon his open brow, shining in his radiant eyes, and revealed in each loving act — now pale and still, like some wondrous piece of sculpture, from which the master's hand had claimed again the immortal spark of life? Over it hung the heart-broken mother, still and woeful in her sorrow, kissing the little dimpled hands that would nevermore encircle her neck in gentle caress, the pale lips unsullied by a harsh or impure word; passing her hands over the sunny rings of hair with a caressing touch — weak demonstrations of such pitiful depths of love and woe as only a bereaved mother heart can fathom.

The doctor came in from his round of morning

calls, and stood awed and impotent in the presence of that holy mystery.

"Is there anything I can do for you now?" He touched the mother softly on the shoulder and awaited her reply.

If he had expected some passionate outburst of sorrow, or incoherent reproaches, so frequently the sole guerdon of the physician when science and skill have done their utmost and failed, he was disappointed. It is a superficial grief that finds expression in noisy upbraiding and wanton parade of its agony before the world. The pain that sinks deepest into the heart, that pierces the very fount of being, gives little outward sign. No harsh cry profaned the solemn stillness of the room. She pressed her hand a moment to her eyes, as if to collect her thoughts, and her voice was steady and low.

"There must be a telegram sent — to my husband. It should have gone before. If you would be so kind, doctor, or if Mr. King" —

The doctor settled the question as to who should undertake the service, by assuring her that the District Telegraph office lay directly on his homeward route. She took the pencil and note-book he handed her, and, writing slowly and laboriously, spelled out the tragical summons. As she returned the book to the doctor, King chanced to lift his eyes, and mechanically read a portion of the address, perceiving at the same time the physician's start of surprise, and the sharp look of inquiry which the latter bent upon him.

The address which King had seen confirmed his previous suspicions. Camp Taylor was a picturesque summer resort, situated in the edge of the redwood forests on the line of the North Pacific Coast Railroad, and patronized by prominent society people who desired to enjoy the freedom of country life, unhampered by conventional restraints. Only the week before a party of men, comprising many of his own acquaintance, Dartmoor among the number, had gone thither for a four weeks' season of recreation. He tried to recall the members of the party, and to fix upon one who might be the father of the dead child ; but, strive as he might, he could not persuade himself that one among them could be so base at heart as to lend himself to the infamy of duping the trustful young creature before him.

Thinking of his old-time friend, a spark of comfort appeared. It occurred to him that Dartmoor was undoubtedly acquainted with the man, and that he was the very one to persuade the scoundrel to do justice to his victim. King knew Dartmoor too well to doubt his chivalric espousal of the weak and wronged. The estrangement that had come between himself and his old comrade was but a shadowy, unreal thing, a figment of his own disordered imagination, as he had often reasoned. The old friendship, true and tangible, still ran its course beneath. Dartmoor always had such a happy faculty of saying and doing the right thing. He would be a powerful ally. If there was anything good about the rascal, he would be the one to bring it to the surface.

As the day drew to a close and the time approached for the arrival of the late afternoon boat from San Rafael, King left the house and paced up and down the narrow street. He could not rid himself of the thought that the coming hour held in reserve for him some startling revelation. The shadows of night came down upon the city, hushing the sounds of traffic and thinning the crowd that moved below, but with the exception of several business men whom he recognized as residents of the neighborhood, no one left the broad thoroughfare to enter the quiet street.

Once a cab dashed along the pavement of the street below, and as the driver came to a halt, looking doubtfully up the steep incline, a man flung open the door, and tossing a coin upon the box, hastened up the hill, brushing roughly past King as he went. He was muffled to the ears in a large coat, and his hat was drawn low over his eyes, but something in his gait and figure thrilled King with a sudden shock. He remained irresolute for a moment and then turned and followed, his mind agitated by strangely conflicting thoughts, apparently devoid of meaning or connection. Now speculating upon the identity of the absent father, now puzzling over the familiar look of the man who had passed him in the dim twilight, he took his way up the street and approached the desolate home.

A faint light was burning in the front room. He gently pushed the door open, and saw the grief-stricken mother seated in a low rocker, with the baby asleep in her arms, and her face bowed over

the little one's head. But the room had another tenant. Beside the bed a man was kneeling, his arms outstretched as if to embrace the silent sleeper, while his face was buried in the covering. The sound of the opening door and of strange footsteps aroused him, and he rose and stood erect, his face vying in pallor with that of the dead child. King stood as one transfixed. At last the mystery was solved. In the still features of the dead were repeated, line by line, those of the haggard face above. For a moment it seemed to Philip King as if his own brain had given way, for before him stood one whose name was synonymous with honor and truth, the man whom he had cherished in memory for years as his own devoted and unselfish friend.

He was face to face with Dartmoor.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW THE BABY WON THE CASE.

WITH the knowledge of the gross deception practiced upon his confiding young neighbor, a great compassion replaced the kindly interest King had hitherto entertained toward the innocent little woman, who pursued her daily round of household duties in unquestioning devotion to her recreant lord. No words had been exchanged between the two men as they confronted each other over the dead child's bed, but as Dartmoor met the steady gaze of the man who had befriended the woman he had wronged, his eyes fell, to be lifted a moment later with an expression of hard defiance.

King left the house in silence, and during the weeks that followed carefully avoided all intercourse with the inmates of the cottage, lest by his unguarded speech or embarrassed reserve he should add the dull weight of suspicion to the heavy burden of care already resting upon Mrs. Pauline's slender shoulders, or precipitate upon her an impending sorrow.

As he passed down the steps of his lodging-house one morning several months later, he heard some one pronounce his name, and turned to see her

going through the narrow passage-way, bearing her little girl in her arms.

"You are going out early, Mrs. Pauline."

In his doubt and uncertainty as to how he should address her he had recourse to the old familiar title. She corrected him with quiet dignity.

"Mrs. Dartmoor, if you please. Mr. King, will you be so good as to read this, and tell me what it means?"

Her voice was cold and measured, and looking into her face, it seemed to him that some subtle change had passed over it, obliterating the laughing lines and investing it with new dignity and strength. She held a folded scrap of newspaper in her hand, and as he took it, he observed to his surprise, that it was a fragment of the social department of the daily "Gasbag." The item to which she called his attention was a brief personal, announcing that Henry Dartmoor, the popular teller of the Yerba Buena Bank, would celebrate his nuptials with a well-known society lady the coming month. The veins on King's forehead swelled out like whip-cords as he comprehended the purport of the lines.

"Mean? It means that he has cheated and deceived you from the first; that he means to fling you aside like a toy he has grown tired of; that he will disown your child."

"He shall never do it. I have been silent too long. I will assert my rights — and the children's."

He knew by the sudden tremor in her voice that the wrong to her living child was insignificant com-

pared to the indignity done the dead. But he marveled at the unexpected strength developed in that shy nature, where he had reckoned upon weak complaint and tearful appeal, dimly comprehending that in the depths of her heart bitter sorrow and tormented affection were held subjective to dominant mother-love, which nerved her to courage for her children's sake.

"I have a paper here," and she touched her breast significantly, "a contract, he called it. He told me it was a lawful marriage, and very common here. I did not like it, for in my country it is the custom to go before the good old pastor in the church, with all the people to see, and the dear parents' blessing; but he wished it, and I trusted him."

She caught her breath for an instant, and her self-command seemed about to give way, but she went bravely on, acknowledging by a grateful glance King's indignant exclamation.

"I am going to a lawyer now. Mr. King, will you help me, for the baby's sake?"

He answered her in simple but heartfelt words, promising to aid her in every way in his power, to be her faithful protector in all ways that a brother might. As their paths separated the child waved her tiny hand in playful farewell.

"Goo'-by. Me go see papa."

"Hush! Never say his name again. He is a bad, bad man!" The mother's voice was stern in its admonition and command.

"He is my papa!"

The child wailed out the words in a tone of anguish that cut to the hearts of the two listeners; then buried her little face upon her mother's shoulder in a storm of tears and sobs. Piteous is the grief of the children orphaned by death, though sweet with the solace of past fidelity and undying affection; but who can measure the tragedy of the cry arising from the little ones renounced by those in whose hearts they should be most fondly cherished — the hopeless wail of the orphaned throughout eternity.

The outraged honor of the injured young mother found expression in prompt and decisive action. One day the following month the massive structure known as the New City Hall was the scene of unusual excitement. Knots of men gathered in the halls and along the open corridors, discussing a topic of thrilling interest. The sidewalk outside was lined with every style of vehicle, ranging from the conservative brougham and victoria to that clumsy contrivance for road locomotion known in local parlance as a "go-devil." A steady stream of people passed up the walks and joined the throng within. All was curiosity and expectancy.

There was one, however, who descended from a Market Street car, and walked wearily in the direction of the entrance. She was plainly attired in some dark fabric, with her features concealed from sight beneath a thick brown veil, and she clasped a child, a little girl some two years old, in her arms. There had been a movement to leave the baby at home, for the propriety of carrying so small a child

into the august dominions of the law had been severely questioned. But it had been impossible to convince the simple young mother that a baby's purity and innocence were incongruous elements to invade the high chambers where justice is dispensed. The baby, too, had protested with all the eloquence of her tearful blue eyes and quivering lip, and the result had been that when the mother started out upon her sorrowful mission, the little girl, arrayed in her daintiest and best, accompanied her in gentle triumph.

The loungers about the doorway idly discussed the approaching contest.

"Regular case of blackmail, and no mistake."

The opinion of the rising young legal luminary who gave utterance to this sentiment was received with unquestioning respect.

"She 's after his money. Not a shadow of doubt as to that!" laughed a solid business man who had come up from Battery Street to enjoy the spectacle. "Who 's her lawyer, by the way?"

"Rogers; respectable old duffer, but slow as a Greaser's conscience. A fine time he'll have of it against Payson, Davis, and the rest. By the way, I hear Judson consented to take hold of the case at the last moment."

"Who 's seen the woman? What is she like?"

"I hain't seen her myself," eagerly announced a tall fellow whose general air of seediness and disrepute proclaimed a litigant of some years' standing. "I hain't seen her myself, but my wife heerd tell as she 's a regular little spitfire; snapping eyes,

sharp nose, and a tongue like an asp. It 's all a piece of spitework from beginning to end. Heerd he was courting that smart girl of Oliver's, you know."

"Stand aside and let this lady pass!"

King's face betrayed the struggle in his heart, where honest indignation and fealty to the weak strove to escape the iron fetters of prudence. The woman raised her veil for an instant, and they had a momentary glimpse of a gentle face, pallid and pitiful in its lines of pain, lighted by a pair of appealing blue eyes. As the men fell back with muttered apologies, the child raised her head from her mother's shoulder, and gazed fearlessly about with a winning smile.

"Dood man! Dood man!" She nodded confidingly to different individuals whom she seemed to single out for her approval. Then, with a satisfied toss of her little head, she added, reassuringly and impressively, "Me come!"

An oppressive silence reigned for a moment. Then one spoke low to his neighbor.

"Pretty little creature, is n't it? And say, did n't you observe — Dartmoor's very eyes" —

"Hush! There he comes."

The defendant in the celebrated case of Dartmoor *vs.* Dartmoor sprang out of a light buggy and secured the horse to a hitching post, caressing the handsome animal's head as he turned away, while his companion, the famous San Francisco lawyer, grown a trifle stout and apoplectic with advancing years, descended from the vehicle with more de-

liberation. The time had come when Colonel Judson could afford to be deliberate in action. Long ago, in hot-headed youth, he had frittered away his days in the toils of a mistaken chivalry; but learning in good season that the true touchstone of success in the legal profession lies in an eloquent espousal of a wealthy client's case, right or wrong, he had wisely eschewed the championship of the weak and oppressed, and exerted himself with noble fervor in his chosen field. In his brilliant argument in the great case of Shaw *vs.* Shaw, similar in principle to the one he was now called upon to conduct, he had won a monstrous fee and touched the zenith of his fame; and his star was slow in crossing the meridian.

Henry Dartmoor, the defendant, was one of the most popular men in the city. During the years King had spent in wearisome and humiliating confinement, life had prospered with his friend. A series of shrewd real estate speculations had resulted in the accumulation of a handsome property, and if there were sometimes rumors afloat that the sum total of his expenditures was hardly justified by the extent of his visible income, he was still ranked with the "solid" men of the town, and generally admired for his genial manner and generous disposition.

Tall and debonair, his gay laugh and careless air betrayed little evidence of discomposure at the effort a shameless woman was making to assert her right to share his name and property. He entered the court-room with a smile of conscious superi

ority, and was at once the centre of a circle of sympathetic friends. The woman, still clasping the baby tightly in her arms, sought refuge in a sheltered corner from rude and curious eyes.

The great hands of the dial on the face of the great clock, solemnly counting the minutes from a dignified post on the wall, pointed to ten o'clock as the judge, a white-haired man of imposing presence, entered the court-room and ascended the judicial seat. The buzzing knots of men dispersed; counsel sought their places; a notable case was about to be opened. The old-fashioned attorney bent over his trembling client, and they whispered earnestly together. Shameless audacity that ventured to present the case for trial in a civil court! Already, through the columns of the daily press, the case had been brought before the supreme tribunal of public opinion, and the bench had found for the defendant without a dissenting voice.

The judge was conscious of a curious sensation as he faced the crowd of disinterested spectators. The baby had caught his hand in passing, and stroked it with her own, while a cooing murmur of "nice man!" left her pouting lips. But what are a child's feeble claims to the great interests of civic equity and justice! He grimly dispersed the throng of unwelcome suggestions awakened by the childish action, and resolutely addressed himself to an impartial hearing of the evidence presented.

The old attorney rose and made a brief statement of his client's case. They would prove, he said, that the plaintiff was an innocent, trusting

girl when she first met the defendant, in a hotel at a suburban watering resort, where she was employed in a menial capacity. The defendant had gone thither for a brief vacation, and, attracted by the girl's sweet face and gentle ways, loitered on from week to week. Armed with his superior worldly knowledge, his accomplished manners, and cool villainy of purpose, he had found it an easy matter to win the young girl's confidence and love; but here his designs encountered an unexpected check. The simple faith and steadfast virtue of the girl proved an effectual protection against his unworthy aims. To accomplish his purpose he had recourse to fraud and treachery, and had run his head unwittingly into the matrimonial noose. A contract which he had drawn up at that time, and to which the signatures of the plaintiff and defendant were both attached, would be produced in due time, and shown to be a valid contract of marriage under the laws of the State. This paper was originally in the possession of the defendant, and it was possible that he never intended that it should pass from his hands, but some three years prior to the institution of the suit the defendant had been prostrated by a sudden and alarming illness. Brought to a realizing sense of the injury he was doing the woman who loved him so faithfully, as well as the child already born to them, he had placed the document in the hands of a mutual friend, and promised to make a public acknowledgment of their union as soon as he regained his health. Recovering from his sickness, and no doubt impatient of his momen-

tary weakness, he had deferred the consummation of his promise from time to time, and finally added to the sum of his other villainies by renouncing the connection and heartlessly abandoning his wife and child, leaving them destitute and dishonored. The plaintiff asked for an acknowledgment of the marriage and a judicial separation, with alimony for the support of herself and child. Old Rogers sat down. He had never forsworn his visionary ideals of manly chivalry to worship the god of mammon, and history would never record his eloquent argument in behalf of the persecuted rich, but a singular hush reigned in the court-room for a full minute after he had concluded.

The witnesses for the prosecution were but three in number. There were others whose testimony would have been valuable, but they had sedulously avoided service of the summons, fearful of being brought into contact with a man of Dartmoor's popularity and influence.

The first to take the stand was the young mother. Crimsoning with shame, paling with anguish, she recounted the history of her relations with the defendant. She described the scene at Dartmoor's sick-bed, and as she related how the invalid, when he had announced his determination to dispel the mystery that had hitherto clouded the happiness of their union, had drawn her face down to his own with whispered murmurs of penitence and love, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

The baby was at her side in a moment, cooing

soft messages of love and comfort, and the clasp of her warm hands, the tender, consoling voice, enabled the mother to stand the hot fire of cross-examination opened upon her by the opposing forces. She even mustered courage to ask the leave of the court to make an irrelevant statement in her own behalf, and, having received permission, stated with a quivering lip that she had brought the suit for the baby's sake, and to clear the names of her children.

The name of Louise Peyton was loudly called, and a richly attired woman sauntered leisurely up the long room and took her place on the witness-stand with an air of perfect composure. Louise Peyton was one of those women of whom San Francisco is prolific in example, who have lost the delicate bloom of womanhood, and yet have never overstepped the bounds which involve the forfeiture of the world's respect. She glanced around upon the waiting crowd with an expression of pleasant good comradeship, and the spectators returned the look with one of genial expectation.

"Your residence and occupation, Miss Peyton?"

"Housekeeper of the Senegambia Hotel."

"Have you any acquaintance with the defendant?"

"Henry Dartmoor has occupied a double suite on our first floor for twelve years, although during the last three years he has seldom used it."

"Do you recollect the circumstances of his illness at your house, three years or more ago?"

"I do."

"Did anything occur at that time in any way relevant to the questions involved in this case?"

"I object," calmly interpolated the defendant's counsel.

"The objection is sustained!" approved the court. "Make your questions a little more definite and less suggestive, Mr. Rogers."

"Do you know anything of a certain paper — did you receive any evidence at that time, which would tend to substantiate the theory of a marriage between the parties in this case?" blundered the old attorney, confused at the sharp check he had received.

"The defendant delivered to me a certain paper, purporting to be a contract of marriage."

"Will you be good enough to produce that document?"

The witness opened a hand-bag that she carried, and handed out a folded sheet of note-paper, which passed from hand to hand until it reached the defendant's counsel. Colonel Judson frowned as he observed the clear and unequivocal language, and saw Dartmoor's dashing signature. Then he gave a glance of anticipatory triumph around the court-room, and, availing himself of the statutory right to examine the witness, elicited some startling facts, most damaging in their bearing on the plaintiff's case.

"What conversation, if any, passed between you and the defendant, preliminary to the alleged production of this paper?"

"I told him that he was a scoundrel to compro-

mise the reputation of an innocent little creature who worshiped the ground he trod, and that he should be made to do justice to her in the eleventh hour."

"Upon the occasion to which you refer, did you or did you not have a weapon in your possession?"

"I did."

There was a sensation in the court. Miss Peyton's face flushed, and she cast an uneasy look in the direction of the rejected wife, who sat pale and silent, her cheek pressed against the fair curls of the child. The little one caught the look and wafted back a kiss, blown from the tips of her pink fingers. A tender smile flitted across the face of the witness, but she awaited in undisturbed composure the next sharp query.

"What was the character of this weapon?"

"It was a 44-calibre Colt's revolver."

"Did you expose this weapon in a threatening manner?"

"I did."

"Was the plaintiff aware of this measure?" The lawyer looked around the court with a self-satisfied smirk. It took a man of genius to reach the bottom facts in such a case, but he would soon have the whole shameless conspiracy laid bare.

"She was not."

"Was n't, eh?"

"No, sir. She never knew of it until this moment."

All eyes traveled instinctively to the place where the unhappy mother sat, lifting to her self-consti-

tuted champion a face of sad reproach. This, then, was the miserable truth. What she had regarded as the voluntary act of atoning love had really been a compulsory deed. She bent her face low over the child's sunny head.

"State to the court exactly what took place on this occasion."

Miss Peyton's eyes flashed fire.

"With pleasure, sir. The doctor had just left the house, and told me at the door that it was doubtful if Mr. Dartmoor survived the night. I went directly to the sick-room, and as I went framed a pretext for getting rid of this little woman, the plaintiff, who had been in constant attendance upon the sick-bed. When she went out I closed the door and locked it. Then I brought out my revolver and leveled it at Dartmoor's head.

"I said, 'I 'll give you sixty seconds to make up your mind to marry Pauline.' He looked at me in an odd way till I got up to ten. Then he said, 'Bully for you, Peyton!'"

"What?" The counsel on both sides were amazed at this strange page of unwritten history unfolded for their perusal. Those who knew Dartmoor's odd ways could not restrain broad grins of delight.

"'Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen!' I counted. He broke in again. 'You 're a brick, Peyton! but are n't you afraid the confounded thing will kick when it goes off?' I did n't care a snap for what he was saying, but went on counting

until I reached forty. Then he spoke up, sharp and clear. 'Put up the pistol, Peyton. She 's as good as my wife already. You 'll find a paper in the left-hand breast pocket of my vest; but, by Jove! I 'll marry her out and out when I get on my feet again.' He made essentially the same statement to the attending physician when he called, half an hour later."

The defendant's counsel were evidently not wholly satisfied with the effect of the mine they had sprung upon the plaintiff's witness, but they looked serenely forward to a successful issue. The aristocratic physician who had attended Dartmoor on the occasion of his illness ascended the stand with a reluctant air. This gentleman was a pillar of an Orthodox church, a man of some austerity of mien, and he took pains to impress upon his hearers in the commencement, with a frown which included both ranks of combatants, that physicians of his standing were much averse to being dragged into scandals of such a nature, and that if he could have foreseen the results that would ensue, he should have peremptorily declined to attend either of the parties to the suit. Questioned by the attorney for the prosecution, he substantiated the statements of the preceding witness regarding the assertions of the defendant in his presence. Cross-examined by the defense, he admitted that he was unable to decide whether the defendant had made the assertion to him seriously or in a jocular manner.

The doctor was about to leave the stand, secretly

rejoicing at the neutral character of his testimony, when an unexpected piece of re-cross-examination transpired. The baby looked at him in serious inquiry.

"Oo got a little girl?" she gravely interrogated.

A mist came over the doctor's eyes. The dews and snows of twenty years had fallen on the grave of his only daughter, in a far-away New England village, but her memory was fresh in his heart. If she had lived to womanhood, and life had gone ill with her, like the poor creature over there! For her sake he resumed his testimony, hearkening for a moment, as if to an unseen presence.

"I will add that I believe the defendant spoke in good faith and sincerity; and I never saw a man happier or more thoroughly satisfied with himself than Dartmoor appeared on the occasion to which I have alluded."

Philip King was called to the stand, and testified as to the circumstances of his acquaintance with the plaintiff, and his encounter with the defendant over the child's sick-bed. He attested the unquestioning devotion accorded by the neglected wife to her recreant liege, and the reasons he had for believing that the latter made habitual use of their domicile as his abode. Turned over to the mercies of the counsel for the defense, he calmly met the insinuating queries regarding the details of his intercourse with the plaintiff, repelling the base intimations with a quiet dignity that impressed all hearers. But the attorney had in reserve one telling shot.

"Mr. King, have you ever had an inside acquaintance with San Quentin?"

Despite King's unvarying candor on the subject of his past, outside of his circle of personal acquaintances and business associates, among the community at large there was no general recognition of his crime. Many of the spectators saw the young man for the first time, and were favorably impressed by his manners or moved to sympathetic indignation by the covert insult of the cross-examination. The innocent and ignorant countenances in the jury-box were alike unknown to him.

He might easily have found refuge in an evasive answer, or taken advantage of a legal quibble, declining to answer on the ground that the question was immaterial and irrelevant to the case. But he lifted his head with the quick backward fling that had become one of his characteristic habits, and a vagrant lock of hair was tossed back by the action, baring his white forehead, with its lines of care and pain.

"I served a ten years' sentence for robbery," he said.

Colonel Judson gave a satirical smile at this compromising admission, and a thrill of contemptuous astonishment ran through the court. A singular incident destroyed the effect of this dramatic episode. Through the air a white rose came flying, and landed at King's feet. Every head was stretched eagerly forward to ascertain the meaning of this spotless messenger. Moved by some strange impulse, the baby had stretched her wee hand over

her mother's shoulder and caught the flower from a glass on the reporters' desk near by, flinging it to her champion, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, like a princess of old, bestowing her favor upon one who had achieved the greatest of all conquests, — the victory over self. King stooped to the floor and lifted the rose as he left the stand; and as his eyes rested on the earnest face of the child, a rare smile dwelt upon his face like a sudden illumination.

The prosecution rested its case, and the plaintiff watched the brisk consultation of the defendant's counsel with a sinking heart. Opposed to her were money and influence, learning and wit, and the popular disregard of a man's responsibility when he wrecks a woman's life to gratify his selfish pleasure. What were the homely methods of a simple old man, the plea of a frail woman, and the claims of an innocent child, to overthrow the tactics of an antagonist at once so powerful and so invulnerable!

Colonel Judson blandly stated that, serious and appalling as were the revelations already elicited from the plaintiff's own witnesses, the defense had others still more astonishing in reserve. A most damnable conspiracy against the fair fame of a man celebrated throughout the entire community for his courage, his humanity, his kindness and generosity, his noble and manly character, was about to be exposed.

The baby had exhausted her small resources in a vain effort to bring back her mother's vanished

smile. Grieved at her failure, she looked anxiously around to determine the cause of the sorrow on that dear face, and as her eyes fell on the colonel's impassive features and her ears caught his incisive utterances, she rose to her feet in her mother's lap and leaned forward, fired with a sudden resolution. A sweet voice rang clearly through the court-room.

"Oo tell a bad story!"

The spectators caught a glimpse of a dainty face, with earnest eyes and a halo of golden hair. The colonel was openly disconcerted. In all the course of his legal experience he had never met with such an interruption. He stated that he would express himself more fully in regard to this atrocious calumny. The mother's gentle efforts to hush the baby were vain.

"Tell true!"

The baby heard the large words with disfavor, and the childish treble sounded again in stern and uncompromising accents.

The colonel strove to recover the lost thread of his argument, floundered and failed. Who was this small creature who dared to interrupt the proceedings of a dignified court of law, who browbeat witnesses, and shrieked forth her senseless cries to the confusion of able and experienced counsel? Tell true, indeed! Truth was an abstract quality with which thirty years at the bar had in no wise tended to increase his familiarity. Preposterous demand to make in a modern court of justice, where polished rhetoric and loud-mouthed oratory laugh honesty to shame, and the blindfold goddess peeps

stealthily beneath her bandage to espy the worldly standing of the parties whose interests are flung into the scales! He scowled fiercely in the direction of the little figure, but as he encountered the child's pure eyes his own fell. The hardened hero of a thousand bitter contests beat a precipitate retreat, flinging one telling shot into the enemy's camp.

"I call upon the first witness for the defense, Henry Dartmoor."

The colonel was a cunning and strategic foe, who loved to deal in surprises. The line of the defense had been carefully mapped out, and presented a dozen avenues of escape. They were prepared to prove that the suit was a blackmailing scheme from beginning to end; that the plaintiff had herself inveigled the defendant into her toils. In consideration of a round sum of cash in hand paid, a number of reliable witnesses were prepared to impeach the plaintiff's previous reputation for chastity. The coercion exercised in the production of the marriage contract was a strong card when effectively handled; and, lastly, there were numerous legal technicalities by which the case could be carried on from court to court until the plaintiff's resources were exhausted, and the case was finally dismissed for want of prosecution.

"Henry Dartmoor!"

What ailed the fellow that he did not answer?

The colonel turned sharply to the rear seat where the defendant had been sitting, his face shielded by his hand. What if the man should weaken and

show the white feather at the last? Thank goodness! the defendant was rising with an air of quiet unconcern, and leisurely picking his way past the outstretched feet of a row of easy-going spectators, too lazy to change their attitude for the sake of expediting his movements. Henry Dartmoor mounted the witness-stand, and looked over the sea of familiar faces with an expression of dignified indifference. A hint of sardonic amusement played about the corners of his firmly set lips, but his eyes were clear and cold. At this instant another unexpected interruption occurred. A glad cry rang throughout the court-room.

"Papa!"

The mother tried in vain to hush the sweet voice. The small face was radiant with happiness and surprise.

"Dear mamma, see papa!"

She escaped from the mother's detaining hands, and sped across the floor, infant vision of innocence and purity. In a moment she had scrambled up the steps to where her father stood, and clasped her arms about his knees, looking up into his face with joyous confidence and love.

"Papa!"

Henry Dartmoor's teeth were tightly set, his features rigid as iron. Gazing straight before him, he reached down and roughly loosed the clinging arms, thrusting the child away.

"Papa!"

Such wonder, such questioning and broken protest, such hurt affection, in the plaintive voice.

Dartmoor cast one quick glance about, then dropped his eyes to the sweet, wistful face. Another moment and she was lifted in his arms. Court and counsel and curious spectators beheld the unheard-of spectacle of a father submitting to the kisses and caresses of the child he was about to brand with the curse of illegitimacy, to deny her most sacred rights, and to cast out, nameless and forsaken, upon the world. Colonel Judson was frantic with rage and vexation. He started to his feet, calling his client's name in an angry whisper.

"Papa, dear papa!"

It seemed as if the baby's hands would never tire of their soft pats and gentle caresses; on cheeks and lips, on hair and brow, the dewy lips never ceased their loving fusillade. The rigid muscles of the man's face slowly relaxed, his lips parted for a long, deep breath, his eyes softened strangely.

"If it please the court," — no one recognized Henry Dartmoor's voice, for a singular tenderness replaced its usual harsh intonations, — "if it please the court, I give up the case."

His excited counsel was by the defendant's side, angrily recalling him to himself, asking him if he wished to become the jeer of the crowd, a laughing-stock throughout the city? Dartmoor put him quietly aside, addressing the court in brave, decisive words.

"I acknowledge the plaintiff as my pure and faithful wife. To this child I concede the doubtful honor of my name."

A scene of wild excitement transpired. No longer

able to restrain themselves, the audience burst into loud cheers as Dartmoor strained the baby to his breast.

There was a whispered colloquy between the old attorney and the judge. Pronouncing some words that were lost in the general confusion, the judge declared the court adjourned; and, stepping forward, he took the child in his arms and kissed her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN ENGAGEMENT THAT WAS MET.

THE directors of the Bank of Yerba Buena were convened in executive session. For the second time in the history of their corporation its trust had been betrayed. Suspicion pointed with little less than certainty to the one of all its employees who had received the heartiest confidence and respect; who had even been admitted to the list of stockholders — doubtless by virtue of the very funds he had purloined, some reflected, with a shudder. Sore as was their outraged sense of honor, the wound to their self-respect rankled deeper.

A springing step was heard mounting the stairs, a light footfall sounded in the hall, the door was flung open, and the suspected stockholder stood before them.

"Saw the lights, and ran up to see what it meant!" he said, lightly. "What 's going on, and why was n't I notified?"

The chill of his associates' manner made itself felt, and his concluding query rang like a brazen note of defiance. The other directors looked at him in quiet scrutiny, but no one seemed disposed to reply.

"Sir!" The president accosted him sternly; and

as the intruder turned and met the accusation of the old man's eyes, the room seemed to spin about him and hell yawned at his feet. "Sir! your presence is not desired. In the name of the board, I must request you to withdraw."

The man's self-assurance collapsed in an instant. He looked helplessly around in the faces of his colleagues, and at one moment seemed about to speak, but faltered and failed. His fellow-directors remembered afterward that he fumbled strangely with the door-knob, and that his retreating footfall sounded heavy and clumsy, like one tottering beneath the weight of age. The body of financiers resumed their deliberations. Before the evening was concluded suspicion had grown to conviction, and no one doubted the result of the investigation that was ordered. As they disbanded, one of them ventured a suggestion to the president.

"Curtis, don't you think we should have put an officer on his track to-night?"

The president reflected a moment. "I don't think he will run," he said, soberly. "However, it may be a wise precaution." And he communicated with the chief of police.

All night long policemen scoured the city, without avail, for a trace of the suspected man. All night the criminal sat at his desk, in a recess of the dimly lighted bank, face to face with the long delayed but inevitable consequences of a guilty career. He vainly canvassed every avenue of escape, discarding each suggestion which presented itself, until but one remained. As the first beams of morning

light stole through the tall windows he took a pen, dipped it carefully in the inkstand before him, and began to write.

The Oakland agent of the "Daily Gong," driving down to the wharf to take passage in the row-boat which was waiting to convey him across the bay, as he passed the bank was startled to see the panel in the large iron door swing noiselessly to allow the egress of a man. The carrier was divided between his desire to inform the police and to drive back to the office, in the true spirit of newspaper enterprise, and communicate the startling news, when he recognized the person whose singular appearance had startled him as a trusted officer and stockholder of the bank, and blessed his lucky stars that he had been saved from making a fool of himself.

Unconscious of the carrier's reflections, the man who had emerged from the bank stood motionless for a moment, gazing up and down the streets and looking fixedly at the tall buildings opposite. His general aspect and behavior were suggestive of one bound on a long journey, who wished to fix indelibly upon his memory the scenes with which he had long been familiar. Once he opened his watch, and carefully compared it with the dial on the tower of the Merchants' Exchange. Then he turned and plodded slowly out Montgomery Avenue in the direction of North Beach.

The morning was gray and chilly, and a heavy bank of fog overhung the bay, at one moment rapidly advancing across the water, and as swiftly

retreating the next, as though salaaming to the rising sun, which was lazily creeping over the crest of Mount Diablo. The fog-horns on Alcatraz and Goat Island sounded a melancholy refrain above the surge of the waves which lapped the shore.

The doors of the office of the principal bathing resort on North Beach were thrown open, and a chilly wind swept through the place, fanning the wrath of a pale, hunchback youth who sat on a high stool behind the counter, gloomily apostrophizing the crazy fools whose mania for early bathing made it necessary to open the establishment at that ungodly hour.

Looking impatiently up the roadway that led from town, the boy's keen eyes descried a man approaching — a person whose face and features were indistinguishable in the distance, whose dress displayed the quiet elegance of a man of fashion, but who walked with a peculiar shambling gait, as if he had only partially recovered from the effects of an all-night orgie.

"There comes one of the idgits a'ready!" exclaimed the lad, contemptuously, uttering the words aloud, as if there was a subtle gratification in the sound.

It was hardly to be expected that the crooked-backed youth should look with any great complacency upon the physical recreation of people endowed with sound muscles and healthy bodies. By some unhappy dispensation the crooks that get into people's bodies are very apt to deform their inner beings, and their souls are pitiable, weak-legged

affairs, ungainly and wizen-faced, which make of their own sorrows repulsive packs to flaunt in the faces of their fellow-creatures. The souls which withstand the dwarfing and disfiguring influences of stunted bodies, and grow up white and saintly, with perfect outlines and symmetrical proportions, are made of nobler stuff than those which invest common clay.

As the early comer mounted the narrow platform of the bath-house the cripple leaned slightly forward, listening intently to the footsteps. His look of fretful vexation changed to pleased surprise, and his whole face brightened as the visitor entered the room and advanced to the counter, flinging down a piece of money with the indifferent and accustomed air of a habitual patron. The boy, with an agility of which his misshapen body gave no promise, ran up a small ladder until his head was on a level with the upper row of pigeon-holes which lined the wall in the rear of the counter, and tossed down a gray knit bathing-suit of the kind affected by strong swimmers. Then he took from its nail a small Yale key, attached to a clumsy brass tag which bore the number 54 deeply graven on its face. Pitching the coin into a drawer which opened with an unmusical ring, he laid a smaller coin in its place.

"Out early to-day, sir," he timidly ventured.

The visitor was slow in replying to the boy's remark, recalling himself with difficulty from an unwonted fit of abstraction, answering briefly and jerkily, as if constraining himself to speak against his inclination.

"Early? Oh, yes, it is rather before my usual time. But I have business on hand — an important engagement that must be met."

He turned and looked out over the water as he spoke, where the gray mist overhung it like a pall. "An engagement that must be met." The words had a singular and ominous ring. The boy pondered them curiously, darting a keen look of inquiry into the man's face.

Having pocketed his change, the visitor drew out his watch and mechanically consulted its face. Then he pulled the fob from his pocket and laid the gold time-piece on the counter.

"Take care of it for me, Jake," he said, carelessly. "It 's hardly the thing to leave valuables lying around these dressing-rooms. If anything should happen, — a whale come along and persuade me to enact the rôle of Jonah, or if I should be shanghaied on board a deep sea vessel, — recollect I devise this little trinket to you as a parting testimonial."

The jocular tone he employed was so like his usual manner that the boy was partially reassured, in spite of the unaccustomed act, but he looked doubtfully after the man's retreating figure, possessed by a nameless dread, an unreasoning presentiment of impending calamity.

A little later the regular tide of visitors set in. The hours passed on, each bringing its usual quota of health and pleasure seekers. Hurrying hither and thither, handing out bathing-suits and towels, selecting keys, making change, posting books, his

head confused by the fault-finding of capricious patrons, the hunchbacked lad forgot his early visitor, and the watch lay, untouched and out of sight, in the safe beside him. As the forenoon advanced the senior proprietor made his appearance, fat and important, and glowing with well-earned prosperity. A little later the place was enlivened by the appearance of a small squad of policemen. They buttonholed the proprietor, who, shocked and startled by the news they had to communicate, repelled their inquiries with a show of indignation.

Think his place was a resort for thieves and lawbreakers? Not much! The fellow would know too much to come there. Had n't seen a sign of him for a week.

"Can't help it!" sturdily insisted the spokesman, a sharp-eyed detective, Fleece by name. "We 've been after him since eleven o'clock last night, and just got on his scent this morning. He came up here at daybreak, and has n't been seen to leave. I dare say he 's safely stowed away somewhere round here."

"You 're welcome to all the thieves you find on my premises!" retorted the proprietor, ironically. "Look here, Jake," addressing the hunchback youth, who had stared from one to another in bewilderment during the course of the colloquy, "54 's not been here this morning, eh?"

"54!" The boy's weak legs shook under him, and a gray shadow fell across his face.

"Look sharp, boy! The officers can't wait all day for you. The man 's a criminal — stolen the

Lord knows how many thousands of dollars from the bank of Yerba Buena."

"I clean forgot," stammered the boy, but the intimidation in his master's tone had nothing to do with his agitation. "I clean forgot. I'd no more than opened up when he come. He asked for his suit, and that's the last I see of him," looking up at the vacant space on the key-board, where the figure 54 stared above an empty nail, "and he said — O Lord! — he said he had an important engagement that must be met."

The boy trembled from head to foot as he concluded his statement. A sudden awful significance attached itself to the simple words. The exasperated detective interpreted them in a very different manner.

"A pressing engagement!" he repeated, satirically. "I dare say! Thought he'd manage to board a vessel out in the stream, no doubt. Give me the morning paper! Where's the shipping list? Two of you men — Brown and Sanders — take a boat and prospect around the piles. Don't miss a nook or cranny. You, Fred, take possession of 54 and all that's in it. No danger of finding the fellow himself there. Here it is: 'British bark Agnes cleared yesterday for Queensland; sails at ten to-day.' And he a friend of the British consul! Get out the best Whitehall boat on the place, boys, and we'll put out into the channel. I'll have the rascal under arrest before noon, or forfeit my professional reputation."

But a few minutes elapsed before the news

spread, and all was excitement at the baths. Nervous mothers, recognizing in every criminal a personal foe, hurried their children into the dressing-rooms, and dried and equipped them for their homeward journeys; stout middle-aged gentlemen climbed upon the platform and sat in their dripping garments, looking not unlike a row of well-behaved sea lions, following the course of the Whitehall boat which shot across the water in the direction of a stately ship that had cast anchor in midstream; venturesome young people explored the dark recesses beneath the buildings, shrieking as they encountered unforeseen obstacles, or laughing gleefully as they met others bound on the same exploit.

A large majority discussed the crime and the criminal with the sense of virtuous superiority well deserved failure usually awards unmerited prosperity. Only a few personal acquaintances of the man who was the topic of discussion maintained a sober silence or exchanged whispered confidences. Down the broad, dusty avenue which led from the heart of the city poured a continuous tide of people, actuated by varying motives of curiosity and genuine concern.

The officer called Fred walked along the narrow platform skirting the long rows of bathing-houses, preceded by the young fellow Jake, and followed by a reporter, formerly of the "Hornet," but latterly of the "Daily Gong," who scented an interesting item of news, and had hastened to the spot. The hunchback halted at a point midway in the

row, pointing mutely to the key sticking in the lock.

"Try it," suggested the reporter. "Perhaps it 's a mere cock-and-bull story after all, and he 's gone off down town again, forgetting to return the key to the office."

The officer laid his hand on the knob, and finding the door unlocked, threw it open. The three men peered curiously into the small apartment. Upon the single chair it contained were piled various articles of a man's wardrobe; a pair of walking shoes and a light rattan cane were in one corner, while upon a hook hung a light summer overcoat and hat.

"Guess I 'll sit down here and have a comfortable smoke!" said the officer, sweeping the clothes from the chair.

"Take care!" said the reporter. His admonition came too late. There was a sullen thud as some heavy metallic substance struck the floor, followed by a loud explosion, and a bullet tore its way through the side wall.

"Left at full cock!" commented the policeman, disengaging the revolver from the folds of the garments and examining it critically. "Mighty careless thing. The man who left it in that shape did n't care a continental for his own or his neighbor's life."

The deformed boy, stooping down, picked up a small vial which he handed to the men, who turned it around to read the label.

"Laudanum! and empty," was the policeman's laconic comment.

The growing horror of apprehension, heretofore repressed, took possession of the boy.

"I knew it, I knew it!" he cried, clasping and unclasping his thin hands, while his eyes sought the faces of the two men as if imploring their dissent. But the policeman only looked a cheerful acquiescence, while the reporter was eagerly examining the inscription on an unsealed letter, which he had taken from one of the pockets of the coat.

"Here 's something!" he said, nodding to the officer significantly, and holding up the envelope for his inspection.

"'An open letter to Philip King,' by thunder!" ejaculated the latter, his features lighting up with curiosity and amazement.

"Know him?" queried the reporter, sharply.

"Know him! Has n't every man on the force been on his track rising five years? He 's a marked man, sir; got a pile of stolen money hid away, sir. We 're bound to run him to cover yet."

"Perhaps this will be of aid to you. I 've been looking for something to turn up about that missing money. This may be the clew we need."

There was an odd smile about the reporter's lips, as if some discovery for which he had long been watching was about to transpire.

"By your leave!" He coolly drew the inclosure from the envelope and spread it out on his knee for perusal, the officer looking eagerly over his shoulder.

The letter was written on Congress paper, bearing the heading of the Bank of Yerba Buena. The

writer, always an elegant penman, appeared to have indited this communication with unusual care, each word and character being formed with the utmost precision, as if to leave no doubt as to their meaning. It began without ceremony or formality, plunging impetuously into the text of the message it was designed to convey.

By the time this letter is placed in your hands, Philip King, you will know me as a thief, a hypocrite, and a coward, who fled the world to escape the storm he dared not face. I myself will add another count to the indictment, and stand confessed a traitor to the friend who gave me his implicit trust. There is no use beating about the bush. I stole the unaccounted balance of the missing funds charged upon you fifteen years ago. I, too, had an idea of replacing the money before they discovered the loss, but when I found you were in the same box, and bound to make a clean breast of the matter, I made up my mind it would make little difference to you if you shouldered the whole, and I let you do it. I proved myself a better financier than you, investing the money securely, where it has made a substantial return of interest and damnation every year. Interest and damnation! Per cents have gone up and down, but the second consideration has always been at a liberal premium. The last year things have gone badly. Some speculations failed, and I made up the deficit in the old way. It is easier the second time. This time they tracked me down.

If the devil himself had n't had possession of me I 'd have owned up to the whole thing that morning I saw you in the city prison. It would have made it easier for you, and have been the salvation of me. A moralist might have drawn a very pretty lesson from our lives

since then, if he could have known all the ins and outs, and observed the inevitable denouement slowly and steadily approaching. It has sometimes been quite an interesting study to me, but I could n't enjoy it with half the zest I might have felt if I had n't a personal stake in the issue. It 's been rough on you, King, but it 's been a hell on earth to me.

It would be very easy to rave over my sins and shortcomings, and scourge myself savagely on paper, but what is to be gained? All the self-recriminations in the world are not going to alter the facts of the case or undo the errors of a lifetime. It is all up now. I go to meet my last account, and to serve as an awful warning to all the Sunday-school children in the land, while you pose as the repentant sinner restored to the fold, confound you!

There is a paid-up life insurance policy for Pauline and the child. I always meant to do justice to her, but it was easier to put it off the longer I let it go. The boy's death maddened me; but I declare to God, Philip, that it was the sight of you as much as the child that drove the devil out of me that day in court. Will you try to have the policy secured to them? I know I have no right to ask you, old fellow, but I somehow have a feeling that, although I have wronged you most, you will be readiest to forgive.

HENRY DARTMOOR.

And what was that, far out upon the bay, where a line of white broke the even, leaden tones of the water, rising and falling with the long swell of the incoming tide?

The people on the beach saw, and shouted to the occupants of the boat, bending down close to the water that the pursuers might hear and take heed. The boatmen saw, and interchanging one significant

look, altered their course, pulling due for the strange object tossing like a broken spar on the rough sea in the mid-channel.

Fleece — possessed by alternations of hope and despair as he saw black clouds issuing from the smokestack of a tug lying alongside of the vessel toward which he was directing his course, reckoning the diminishing distance between the boat and the vessel, inwardly protesting that the rascal would yet find that he, Fleece, was one too many for him, vowing that no power on earth should rob him of his prey, solacing himself with the assurance that in five minutes' time he would serve his warrant and hold the criminal captive — observed the change in the boat's course, and turned to the boatmen with a muttered curse on his lips. He followed the direction of their eyes and observed the helpless object floating about on the water, buffeted by wind and wave, but a few rods distant, and the angry expostulation on his lips was hushed.

Thrice the fog, drifting along the channel, closed down about them, effectually shutting them off from all sight and sound save the dull thud of their own oars as their measured plash in the water reverberated against the sullen walls of mist. Thrice they were as completely cut off from the busy life about them as if afloat on a shoreless sea in a phantom universe. But the boatmen, bending low over the water and searching the mist with practiced eyes, pulled steadily on. When the mist lifted for the third time the thing they sought was within an arm's length of the officer of the law, but he made

no movement to execute his warrant. It was the boatmen who laid hands on the ghastly object and drew it over the side, and laid it in the bottom of the boat, a grim and piteous sight, with clinched hands outstretched, and fixed eyes staring at the sky. And it was the detective who drew back dismayed in the presence of the culprit, and made no movement to apprehend him; who nervously clasped and unclasped about his own wrist the stout manacles he had designed for the prisoner; who shrank, awed and silent, in the majesty of a presence which dwarfed the might of worldly government.

Safely delivered from the clutches of the law, ladies and gentlemen! Out of the jurisdiction of the court. Held to answer before that awful tribunal where Truth and Justice hold eternal dominion; where Divine Love advocates the cause of erring humanity, and Infinite Mercy tempers the verdict.

Slowly and silently the boatmen reversed their course and pulled back in the direction of the wharf, to where the waiting crowd had observed their action and divined its purport, and a crippled boy awaited their coming in dumb agony. Men and women crowded eagerly about the landing, struggling for a glimpse of the fugitive, joint defaulter from the corporate institution whose trust he had betrayed, and from life with its responsibilities; and the greater crime was that which they reckoned not, or only mentioned with hushed voices, and with compassion rather than blame.

Meanwhile, the weeks that had just passed had

held a singular experience for Philip King. In the confusion that followed upon the abrupt and unexpected conclusion of the trial, he had passed unnoticed from the court-room. His sudden relief from the post which he had assumed toward the young mother and her child, coupled with the needless humiliation which had been forced upon him, worked a singular revulsion of feeling. A dull time pervaded business circles, and his patronage was declining. Seeing his income steadily diminishing, he grew impatient of the monotony of his life, and the measured success which had attended his business undertakings seemed petty and insignificant.

He conceived a sudden disgust for his profession and all that pertained to it, scorning its small fees and slow methods. The next day and the next found him sitting inactive in his room or making short visits to his office, postponing engagements and delaying the performance of pressing duties. His quondam partner was absent on a summer's tour through the Yellowstone Park. For the second time in his career he made the mistake of avoiding his friends, for he felt that a knowledge of his frame of mind would undermine their confidence in his stability of purpose, and, aided by loneliness and separation, the peculiar mood which had taken possession of him controlled him more and more, until duty and ambition fled before it. One day he put a sign on his door, "Out of town," and went down to a seaside town to recruit.

The morning after his arrival at the watering-place he awoke with a chill of horror. The sense

of self-distrust, previously vague and incomprehensible, assumed definite form and substance. He imagined that the evil tendency to which he had yielded once before was stealing over him again, like some black shadow of hereditary influence. The steadfast purpose which had heretofore sustained him, the rules and principles by which he had abided, in his morbid self-accusation stood revealed to him as hollow pretenses by which he had sought to win the favor of the community.

He made a vain effort to shake off the mood, and endeavored to analyze the predisposing causes. Before him rose the face of Robert Curtis, president of the Bank of Yerba Buena, wearing a look of ineradicable distrust. He alone saw through the felon's transparent devices to win back the trust he had deservedly forfeited, and recognized him for the hypocrite he was.

As King pondered this man's disbelief in the sincerity of his reformation he recalled Stubbs's melancholy forebodings that the day might come when he would backslide, and whimsically reflected that if any one could be ranked a connoisseur in matters of that ilk, Stubbs deserved the title. Study as he might, the unfortunate man could see but one way to exorcise the spirit of unrest which seemed to have possessed him. The alternative was still open to him to betake himself to some distant country where he could begin life anew, untrammeled by suspicion and prejudice.

He returned to the city, resolved to settle up his affairs as speedily as possible. By one of those un-

happy fatalities so frequently encountered in life, on the day of his arrival he found temptation awaiting him in a tangible form.

At the entrance to the building in which his office was situated he encountered two gentlemen — one an honest-looking man of middle age, clad in a rough tweed traveling suit; the other accosted King with an air of genial good-fellowship.

"Just in time, King. Wanted to see you on a little business. Just going up, old fellow?"

King answered the man a little stifly, for he recognized him as a shrewd speculator, Warren Bryant by name, who had been involved in several cloudy mining transactions, from which he had emerged with varying degrees of financial success, and the reputation of having outwitted some of the sharpest men on the street.

"Make you acquainted with Mr. Laidlaw — Glasgow gentleman. Come all the way out here to gobble up a fat piece of mining property for a company in which he is interested."

A knowing wink directed at King accompanied Bryant's concluding statement. Mr. Laidlaw appeared half inclined to resent his companion's familiar tone, but nevertheless extended his hand to King, out of deference to a national superstition prevailing throughout Great Britain, by which her subjects are educated to regard handshaking as an inexorable law of American courtesy on all occasions.

"Will you step up to my office, gentlemen?" said King, politely, feeling somehow that of all the world

Bryant was the last man he would have chosen to meet that morning. The two men complied with his request, as a matter of course, and a few moments later were seated in the assayer's comfortable room. With great ostentation, Bryant drew two packages from his pocket.

"Our friend Laidlaw here has been scouring the country for a tin mine these three months past," he announced, impressively. "I happened to be looking at some new prospects up near Shasta, when he dropped down on us; and, if you believe me, the next day we hit upon this."

He opened the larger of the packages, displaying a couple of fragments of grayish rock, which King received and inspected critically.

Bryant began to unroll the other package, talking as he did so.

"We had n't any chemicals handy, so we had to do the best we could. There happened to be a blacksmith's forge near by, so we stuck some of the ore in there, and got this."

He unrolled the second package, and displayed a small bar of iron covered with patches of glittering white metal. King received it in silence, and as he did so felt his hand trembling in an unaccountable manner; but he looked Bryant square in the face. The speculator evaded his eye.

"We want an assay, King, quick as you can make it. Mr. Laidlaw wants to close the bargain as soon as the thing 's in shape. I knew we could rely on you to do the thing squarely."

Bryant succeeded in getting his eyes back to

King's face with his concluding words, and they rested there with a long, significant look. King felt a numbed sensation, as if a serpent were coiling tightly about him; but he contrived to make an assent, and the men rose to go.

"I have heard of you from my friend Mr. Endicott, Mr. King. He told me that I could trust you," said the Scotch gentleman, in parting. A flush of shame covered the assayer's face, but he bowed quietly, and accompanied them to the door. He heard the two men pass along the hall, and a moment later his ear caught the sharp tinkle of the elevator-bell. The next instant hurried steps approached his door, and Bryant's evil face looked in.

"You understand, King. Divy on the square. A handsome thing for you, if you do the right thing." And he was gone.

King rose and locked the door after him, then took the specimens and passed into his laboratory. He threw off his coat and took down certain acids, grinding up fragments of the ore and subjecting them to various tests. When he had finished his lips were compressed, and a frown had gathered on his forehead. Then he took up a rusty knife which lay on a shelf, and ran some borax over it at a high heat. The borax dissolved the oxide of iron, leaving the metal clear and white as silver. He compared the blade with the bar of iron he had taken from Bryant. The effect produced on the two articles was identical.

His first sensation was one of hot anger and resentment. If the would-be swindler had presented

himself, he felt that he could have brained him on the spot. This feeling was succeeded by a sense of inexpressible humiliation that he should have been thought open to such an offer. But what if he should avail himself of the chance? He would be at once placed in possession of all he was working for — would be relieved from the drudgery of daily work, free to move whithersoever he chose. And when the fraud was revealed, who could say he had a part in it? The worst that could happen would be the loss of his professional reputation, when he had no longer need of reputation, and a new suspicion in the community, which had all along regarded him with suspicion and distrust.

He walked out upon the street; but temptation went with him, whispering ugly suggestions in his ears, pointing out to him the way to make himself superior to the purse-proud class who looked down upon him, promising him plenty and indulgence in exchange for his weary labor. A week passed by, and his business was still neglected; the package of ore, and the iron bar with its gleaming patches, lay undisturbed in his laboratory. The time was drawing near when he must come to a decision.

He walked along the streets one morning, a man oppressed with the heaviest of all burdens — the crushing weight of self-distrust; shunning the eyes of those he met, lest they should read his vacillation and uncertainty. Suddenly a genial, cordial voice accosted him.

"King! Good morning!"

The man who had caught his hand and was

shaking it awkwardly, but with hearty cordiality, was an old schoolmate and friend of his early manhood, who had hitherto noticed him with a stiff nod. He had no time to ponder the meaning of this encounter, for Murphy and Tom Ellis crossed the street to meet him, their faces aglow with honest delight.

"Congratulations, Mr. King!" shouted Tom Ellis.

"King, I beg your pardon. Here 's my hand!" said the elder man, with some pomposity.

"I don't understand," said King, looking from one to the other with questioning eyes.

"Don't understand! Haven't you seen the extra issued by the 'Daily Gong' an hour ago?"

Murphy held out a paper, opened to where flaming headlines proclaimed the morning's tragedy. King read the headings slowly and laboriously, grasping but one meaning — that Dartmoor, his old friend, driven mad by guilt and despair, had sought a suicide's death.

"Don't you see, Mr. King? The letter! It was directed to you," explained young Ellis, running his finger down the column. "It clears you of that trumped-up story. Sets you straight at last."

"Don't!" King checked the boy's impetuous outburst with a stern gesture. What was it worth to be exonerated at such a cost! He left Murphy and his nephew standing on the street-corner, and holding the paper still in his hand, found his way up Halleck Street, and to the rear of the city prison.

He joined the curious and morbid rabble that thronged the morgue, and the crowd fell back at his approach, granting him unimpeded passage to the marble slab where the suicide's body lay exposed to the gaze of curious and morbid spectators. It was quickly whispered about that the man who had been so grievously wronged by the dead stood beside the corpse, and people bent forward eagerly, expecting to detect some expression of bitterness or triumph in the new-comer's face; but he only gazed long and sorrowfully upon the still sleeper, and once lifted the dead man's hand in his own, replacing it gently upon the slab. He had no word of sympathy or consolation to offer the black-robed woman, with stony face, who kept silent guard by the dead man's side, unnoting the throngs of people who came and went.

Then he turned away and walked slowly down the street, in the direction of his office, his heart oppressed with painful suggestions and memories. Insensibly to himself, the vague doubts and forebodings regarding his own honesty of purpose — light figments born of morbid self-accusation — gave way to a deep compassion for the man who had once been his friend. If Dartmoor had only resolved to brave it out and face the consequences! He was such a genial, popular fellow, with so many essentially noble traits, no one could have resisted his honest penitence and desire to make atonement. He had not once considered the personal significance of the suicide's confession in its bearing upon his own position in the community.

As he neared the Bank of Yerba Buena the heavy door swung noiselessly on its hinges, and the president appeared, pausing to lift his hat from his head and wipe his forehead with the silk handkerchief he drew from his pocket. As he perceived King he stepped hastily forward to intercept him, silently offering him his hand. King checked his progress, looking him steadily in the face, but made no answering movement. He saw before him the man who had constituted himself his bitter and inexorable judge, whose silent skepticism and scorn had well-nigh thwarted his efforts to free himself from the heavy incubus of past error; who had been a mocking spectator of his struggles and discouragements; the man who had undoubtedly been the direct cause of Dartmoor's desperate flight from the consequences of his folly and sin.

"You have saved me the necessity of going to you," said the president, quietly. "I was just on the point of making a call at your office."

"Yes?" returned King, dryly. Angry utterances were trembling on his lips. He could with difficulty repress some expression of his indignation. An overmastering temptation was upon him to publicly arraign the self-righteous man before him for his virtuous contempt of human frailty, to tear the mask from his gentle manner, and expose his egotism and inhumanity to the world.

"I wanted to see you," continued the president, apparently unmarking the young man's constraint and repellent manner. "I believe I will ask you to come here after dinner to-night — say, about

seven o'clock. I hardly think I shall be at leisure before. I have had a great deal to occupy me in the last twenty-four hours, and there is important business to be discharged to-day."

To a man who possessed no insight into the unrelenting, unfeeling nature of the man, the worn look about Robert Curtis's eyes, and an involuntary gesture of weariness which he made as he spoke, might have conveyed the impression that the tragical events of the day had not been without their effect upon the speaker, but no such fancies found their way into King's mind. A savage intensity of purpose was in his eyes.

"I will come," he said, simply, but his voice had a stern ring, as if some grim purpose had taken possession of his mind, and his words embodied a pledge and a menace.

Neither the death of Dartmoor, with its attendant revelations, nor the stern resolve he had conceived, served to quiet the singular feeling of discouragement and unrest which had obtained dominion over King. The fate of his friend — a man who had fallen under the same temptations that had wrecked his life, but who, unlike him, possessed ties and obligations which might have stimulated him to retrieve his standing — only served to convince King of the futility of his own efforts, and his inability to persevere longer in his self-appointed course, sustained by no motive more substantial than his own empty ambition.

When he reached his office he found a telegram awaiting him. He saw the postmark Reno, Nevada, and tore it open. It was in the cipher used

by a mining company with which Bryant was connected. King took the key to the cipher from the desk and translated the message.

Why don't you make return? Doctor the ore properly, and we give you one third interest.

WARREN BRYANT.

King drew pen and paper to him and rapidly wrote two messages. The first was addressed to Bryant, and contained but four words: —

The ore is worthless.

The second was addressed to the Scotch gentleman, at the Palace Hotel, and read as follows: —

DEAR SIR: You have been deceived by an old trick. The bright metallic appearance which you saw on the bar of iron prepared by Bryant and his confederates was caused simply by the agency of borax acting upon the rust, which left the metal white and clear. The ore contains a mere trace of tin, and is worthless. If you will apply to the State Mining Bureau, you can obtain information of a large deposit of the ore of which you are in search, which is in the hands of honest and reliable men. Respectfully yours, PHILIP KING.

He rang up a messenger-boy and dispatched him with the telegrams. Then he went deliberately about assorting the papers in his desk. The question of his departure, hitherto a matter of vague speculation, had become a definite conclusion. He was still at work putting his possessions in order for the change, when the growing dusk warned him that the hour for his interview with Robert Curtis was at hand.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECALLED.

ROBERT CURTIS rose from his chair as a shadow darkened the doorway of his little glass office.

"Have a seat, have a seat, Mr. King. You are punctual to the minute."

Philip King disregarded the invitation and remained standing where he was, a strange agitation visible in his face, and one hand thrust into his breast-pocket.

"I do not know why you have sent for me, Mr. Curtis, but as you called me here, I am going to ask you first to listen to me."

The president of the bank made no reply in words, but silently awaited his visitor's communication.

"When I committed the crime by which I forfeited your trust fifteen years ago, my first impulse was cowardly, and I yielded to it and fled from those I had wronged. Before I had been two days out to sea I would have given worlds to have remained and met the consequences like a man. The officers thought their agent made a swift and skillful capture that day in Hongkong, but I had gone down to the wharf expressly to ascertain the date of the departure of the next home-bound vessel, and voluntarily placed myself in the detective's

hands. Upon the trial you know I made no struggle, interposed no defense. You misjudged me, and imagined I was suing for clemency. If I had been, I should have been grievously disappointed; but I tell you now, sir, and you can believe me or not, that after the first shock of realization was over, I would not have had the sentence altered. I felt as if I could only regain my self-respect through some long and painful atonement. I suffered keenly enough under the public disgrace, but the inner sense of guilt oppressed my very soul. When I came back, my one ruling desire was to wipe out the score you had against me here; but unforeseen and apparently insurmountable obstacles were in my way. Everywhere I went I encountered distrust and suspicion. It was next to impossible to obtain honest employment. Of all I met and endured at that bitter epoch of my experience, your contemptuous treatment on the day of my return cut the deepest."

The hand King had thrust in his breast-pocket gave a sudden violent movement, as if within its grasp it held something capable of forcible protest against the indignities he had suffered, some weapon which would forever wipe out the withering scorn of the man before him.

The most acute observer, had there been one present, could not have fathomed what was passing through the mind of the elder man, beneath the inscrutable look he had worn from the time his visitor entered. He was alone, in an isolated department of a deserted building, and at the mercy

of a man who evidently regarded him as his bitter and unrelenting foe; a man who was laboring under strange excitement, and fingered that mysterious something in his breast with ever-increasing agitation. Yet the placid look on the president's face deepened into an expression that was almost benign, which gradually made itself felt through the singular agitation of the speaker, and calmed him slightly, though it was powerless to avert the stormy outburst that had been breeding for years.

"I plodded on honestly, though beset by all manner of temptation. A man does not spend ten of the best years of his life in a California penitentiary without learning of many ways in which money can be made without labor, and with small risk of compromise. But I never deviated from the line I had marked out, and worked steadily on for the end I had in view. There was a time when courage failed me, but I was saved — by a woman's hand; saved, and brought to realize new obligations to myself and to society; to recognize that even a man who has committed a crime may hope, by earnest endeavor, to regain a place of respect among his fellow-men. One thing all the time threatened to frustrate the object for which I labored. What better than derision could a man expect, if he offered in restitution for a robbery two thirds of the sum he was believed to still retain? The missing amount is now accounted for, and to-day I can lay before you one half the sum, with interest on the whole, that you lost by my dishonesty fifteen years ago. In time I hope to be able to make good the rest."

The hand that had been fumbling in his breast was withdrawn, holding in its grasp an envelope filled with notes, which he deposited quietly on the president's desk. The gray-haired man clutched the bills eagerly, turning them over with a caressing touch, as one lingers over priceless treasure, then lifted to the dark-browed man before him a face aglow with the tenderness and confidence of a father.

"Ah, Philip, my boy," he cried, in a cordial voice that came back to the younger man like the echoes of an almost forgotten youth, "this justifies my faith in you, and makes easy and natural what I have to say. But first recollect, my boy, that a man in my position has a duty to fulfill to society, and while my heart was yearning toward you I have never been free to follow its instincts. Perhaps — who knows? — you needed the tonic of disbelief. You always were an obstinate fellow. But now to business. I am authorized to offer you your old place, at your former salary, one half to be applied every year toward replacing the amount of your deficit — which, thank the Lord! will soon be compassed, with the help of this sum before me. Philip King!" the old man's voice quavered, "I have been looking forward to this moment fifteen years."

With quick, nervous steps King crossed the floor, and stood looking through blurred eyes into the dimly-lighted outer apartment, with its maze of empty counters, while the president remained sitting in his chair, his head bent forward and resting

on his hand. It was a peculiar exposition of character in these two men, that at this moment of supreme contact, when soul reached out to soul as it might never again in a lifetime, neither dared to look the other in the face.

The air of proud humility which had characterized King's attitude during the early portion of the interview had wholly disappeared when he turned back. None of the trials through which he had passed had unnerved him like this unexpected offer, and the tremor of strong emotion was in his voice as he replied : —

"I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Curtis, but I will say that it restores my self-respect to find that you are ready to trust me again. I shall have courage now." He threw his head back with an unconscious gesture as he spoke, and his whole frame seemed to expand and gain in height and dignity. "Courage to keep on in the path I had marked out, to live down suspicion and prejudice. You must know how tempting this offer is to me." The winning, ingenuous smile which had characterized Philip King in his early manhood played for a moment about his lips. "But you know, too, that it is my plain duty to decline it. It is impossible to measure the effect of the example upon the other employees, if they should see among them a man who appropriated funds intrusted to him, and whose offense had been palliated."

The older man listened with a face calm and impressive as if hewn from granite. He disregarded King's objections as coolly as if they had been so much thistle-down.

"That is a matter," he coolly returned, "regarding which you must allow us to be the judges. Mr. King, this question has been fully discussed by the entire board of directors in session; and it is our unanimous sentiment that we want no better example for young and old than that of a man who has honestly acknowledged and bravely borne the penalty of his crime, and afterward, by years of hard labor and patient endeavor, acquired a reputation for integrity second to none in the community.

"And now, Philip, dropping business matters," he continued, "I advise you to let no false scruples stand in the way of your happiness. Your penalty has been long and severe as the most merciless judge could desire. Even if you are still willing to immolate yourself, you should not let that brave girl suffer longer."

The younger man heard him through in growing wonder. Doubt, amazement, a torturing hope, succeeded by dull incredulity, swept over him. He leaned forward heavily upon his hands, which rested on the edge of the desk, grasping the edge as if for support, as he looked his adviser in the eye, with a conviction that he was being made the victim of some cruel joke.

"You are wrong," he said, slowly, and with sad decision. "She warned me off — herself — at the outset. She told me" — he paused and went through a mental exercise, as if rehearsing a painful lesson, oft and carefully conned — "she said I must not come there too often. That my own judgment would teach me how compromising it would be."

"She did, eh?" exclaimed the old man, smiling in evident approval. "I knew Miss Thaxter was a very bright little woman, but upon my word, I never gave her credit for such self-command and common sense. You have a reasonably logical mind, Philip King. What benefit do you think you would have derived from any woman's influence at that time, if people could have ascribed her championship of the sinner to her infatuation for the man?"

Without comment or response, moving slowly and mechanically, like one in a dream, Philip King left the office.

"I thought you would not let the day go entirely by without coming."

How he had covered the ground that lay between the bank and the quiet home in the Western Addition, he could scarcely have told, but he found himself in the little study, with its crimson hangings, its well-worn, leather-covered furniture and its glowing fire. He had made his way thither, possessed by a mad desire to cast himself at her feet, to kiss the hem of her robe, to implore her mercy and forgiveness; and if she should look down upon him with tender, pitying eyes, if the words to which he had just listened were indeed no fiction of the imagination, and the rich treasure of her love were really his, to pledge himself eternally her devoted slave, the remainder of whose life should be one long atonement for the past. And behold! she had arisen from her chair, chaste and cold and beautiful

as Diana, and addressed him in the frank language and even tone of an indifferent friend.

"It has been an exciting day for me."

He passed his hand over his forehead, as if with the gesture he would sweep away the confused throng of hopes and fears by which he was encompassed, and regain his accustomed composure, where no glimpses of an unattainable Paradise disturbed the drear monotony.

"But a day of triumph also!"

Her voice had a jubilant ring. He looked at her in silent questioning.

"Oh, yes; poor Dartmoor. I can't say I rejoice over that."

"I do." The clear, bright look of a dearly won victory was in her eyes. "He had lived a lie for years. It was infamous to let the cloud of his own misdoings rest on you. I rejoice that he has been brought to justice, though it has been by his own hand, and before the tribunal of another world."

King remained with his gaze fixed upon the fire while she was speaking, and with a dull pain stirring in his heart. The dim suspicion he had once cherished that some attachment existed between her and the man whose death was that day the topic of the city had long ago been dispelled. But it came to him with the force of a conviction that no woman could denounce in this grave, cool manner the wrongs of the man she loved. She was a stanch, true-hearted friend; he must always bear that in mind. It was due to her that he should make her his confidant in the good fortune that had

befallen him that night, and then he would betake himself back to his cheerless room and forget the mad hope that had stirred his heart for a single hour.

"I did not come to speak of that, Miss Thaxter," he said, hurriedly. "Something else has happened to-day; something infinitely more cheering to discuss, and in which I am assured of your congratulations."

"I have been expecting it."

He heard her comment in passing wonder. Were a woman's intuitions then so keen that she could anticipate the deliberate act of a body of practical, sober-minded business men?

"It was a great surprise to me," he said, simply.

"Because you have all along underrated yourself. I foresaw it from the first."

"It is very good of you to say so, but I cannot understand."

She met his bewilderment with a look of dauntless friendship.

"It is right and best that it should be so. She is very young and innocent, but there is a sweet strength underlying the girlish nature."

"What girlish nature? Miss Thaxter, will you have the goodness to explain what you are talking about?"

"I am talking about that charming girl, Annie Ellis. Forgive me if I am premature in my congratulations. I thought I understood your allusion."

She spoke so brightly and cheerily that he re-

flected she must have fancied she had seen the development of a romance, and watched its progress with sympathetic interest.

"Miss Thaxter," he said, calmly, "did you see an account of an accident that happened in Murphy's foundry last month?"

She gave a slight shudder at the memory.

"Indeed I did, Mr. King. What a narrow escape for Miss Ellis! And what heroic sacrifice on the part of the workman!"

"That workman was Annie Ellis's father."

"Her father!"

"A fellow convict of mine; a man who was under a twenty years' sentence for murder. There were mitigating circumstances — but never mind! His children were ignorant of his painful story. They did not know of his existence until after the accident. Then they learned both."

"And then?"

She was standing with her folded arms resting on the tall back of one of the library chairs, and bent slightly forward as she asked the question, her voice tremulous and her eyes aglow with a woman's deep appreciation of a gallant and unselfish deed.

"He lies in Annie Ellis's pretty room. His son and daughter watch over him night and day."

"How you must honor as well as love her!"

"It would avail me little if I did. Young Benchley, the superintendent of the works, has worshiped her since she was a child, but struggled against his passion, believing her to be too ambitious in taste, too frivolous in character, to tolerate

his sterling simplicity. Now he has found out his mistake. He is a noble fellow, and he will win her."

She remained silent and irresponsive after he had finished speaking, as if lost in deep study, trying to adjust what she had just heard to her preconceived fancies.

"You do not ask me the character of my glad tidings."

She looked up at him, and in her eyes he saw something for which he had waited fifteen years.

"Tell me," she said, softly.

"I have been recalled to the bank."

"Oh, Philip! I am so glad."

She stretched out both her hands to him, and tears overflowed her eyes. With a woman's quick instinct, she realized that she had betrayed herself. With a woman's desperate impulse of concealment, she hastened to compromise herself still further in an attempt to annul the force of her blunder.

"It has been such a long, hard fight," she said. "No friend could look on and not be moved by a heartfelt desire for your success."

After the first warm grasp her hands had grown limp and chill, and she was struggling to withdraw them; but he had clasped them tightly in his own and drew her to where the light of an astral lamp fell full upon her face, revealing the traitorous flush of color in her cheeks and telltale moisture in her eyes.

"Is it true? Do you care so much?"

Even in that moment, with a tempestuous pas-

sion surging in his heart, the habit of self-restraint was so strong upon him that he simply held her hands gently imprisoned in his own and earnestly scanned her face, for the first time sorrowfully noting how it had thinned and grown haggard in the last twelve months.

"Care!" Her look was an eloquent assurance. How she had loved and worked and waited for this. She drew a deep sigh of content, and laid her head on his shoulder like a tired child.

He did not know how he had longed and despaired and hungered for this hour, until he held her heart to heart, listening to her broken protests of affection, moved by a joy so deep and strong that it could find no expression in words.

"And you have really loved me through it all?" His voice was solemn with awe and thanksgiving. "So loyal that you never faltered, even when you knew I had become unworthy — that to hold fast to me imperiled your own good name and standing?"

She drew impetuously away, hiding her face for an instant in her hands. When she lifted it again he was shocked at the change that had passed over it.

"Philip! Philip!" Her voice was sharp with pain. "Do you suppose I do not remember — have not remembered — all these years? Oh, those shameful, senseless words! What would I not give to recall them."

"Hush! You shall stop." He made an unavailing effort to check her. "What stamp of man

was it who could be tempted by a girl's playful words?"

"They were not playfully said, dear. I sinned in thought before you did in deed. But oh, Philip, to think that I had been the evil genius of the man I loved — to feel that I was responsible for all that he was suffering — to be conscious that society received me on false grounds! Indeed, my penalty has been the heavier."

He passed his hand caressingly over her forehead and smoothed back the glossy bands of hair from her temples, conscious only of a hungry craving to satisfy himself of the reality of this rich fruition of his hopes.

"Hush, dear! Do not accuse yourself."

"You shall let me speak, Philip. If you take me you must know me as I am. The one thing that has nerved me to endure it has been the hope that as I dragged you down, I might help you in some small degree to rise again! but you have gone so far beyond me, dear. I feel that I am such an insignificant factor in your life. It is so complete without me. You have no need of me."

"No need? O God! You do not know." His voice choked as the desolation of the past rose before him.

And then a strange thing happened. Some habit of iron self-control broke down. The man who had faced guilt and disgrace with the calm of a stoic, who had patiently submitted to a long period of degrading punishment without a murmur, and emerged to make a brave fight with the world,

handicapped on every side by prejudice and contempt; who had endured without betrayal the pangs of bodily starvation, and the deeper pain of a heart denied the invigorating influence of a single human tie — in the hour of his final success, when a flood of sunshine banished the shadows forever from his life, buried his face in his hands and wept.

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO GIFTS.

On the morning of her wedding day Margaret Thaxter bent over a curiously shaped basket fashioned of native reeds, which had been sent up from a little seaboard town away down on the Guatemala coast, where tidings of the approaching ceremony had found their way through some unknown agency. As she loosed the strings which bound down the cover, there came tumbling out a wealth of sea shells of marvelous beauty of form and coloring, dyeing the air with their reflected splendor. Surprised and delighted, she explored this treasure, heaping the shells upon her lap and on the floor around her, until she seemed enfolded in a glad radiance of prismatic color. She came at last to a folded sheet of paper, and eagerly read its contents: "The gift of four little children, to the bride of one whose generosity and mercy restored their father to them." She glanced up and saw her lover standing silently in the doorway, a happy light in his eyes as he viewed the fair picture before him.

"What does it mean, Philip?"

He stooped over her and read the penciled words.

"It must be from Burke's children," he said, gently.

"Burke!" She puzzled over the name a mo-

ment. "Burke? The trusty who hid the tools — who added four years to your sentence; who afterwards escaped from the country; who only had the grace to confess the wrong he had done you when it was too late to be of any help?"

"Not too late!" he corrected her. "No act of honest atonement is ever too late. It helped me in other ways — cleared me of unjust suspicion, confirmed the faith and sympathy of a few, lightened my load of disgrace."

"But I do not understand yet." She was rereading the little slip of paper. "You helped him to go away, and you knew then? Oh, Philip!"

She read her answer in his eyes, and as she broke off speaking, unable to rise because of the frail splendors with which her lap was heaped, she reached her hands upward to him where he stood, and her look of girlish pleasure was replaced by the serene light of womanly rejoicing.

"How differently I am situated from most women who stand on the threshold of marriage. They are possessed by a spirit of blind trust, and overcast by dim misgivings of revelations which the future may hold in store. I have measured all the evil in your life. The good alone remains unexplored."

"But if there were no evil to be measured" —

"We might never have learned a proper valuation of the good."

"Hush! You utter heretical doctrine." And then she noticed for the first time that he had a freshly opened letter in his hand.

"See, dear, I count this as one of the blessings of the day."

She saw the Portland post-mark, and guessed its purport.

"Philip! your father?"

"Yes. The stock-raising venture has proved a failure. He says he is getting old, he cannot be here long, and he wants Fred under my influence. The boy himself sends a line — a manly word of regret."

"And you will answer, Philip? I know what you will say. We shall have them both with us."

"I have answered. Poor old father! It is good to have the chance to make up to him for the past."

Several personal friends of Philip King — men who had known him in his youth, and followed his fortunes in later years — determined to disregard the injunction "no presents," which appeared on the wedding invitations, and to unite in offering him some testimonial of their esteem. A few among them regarded the occasion as an opportunity to atone for injustice they had done him in the past.

They met together for consultation one day, in a private room of one of the down-town clubs. The general sentiment was that the gift must be modest and inexpensive, and yet distinctive in character; something, in short, that they would give to no other man but King, and that would hold some real significance.

They spent an hour or two discussing the absurd suggestions which emanated from various masculine minds. They canvassed every available commodity,

from a photograph album to a model of the Comstock mines. A young Englishman — one Endicott, who had joined their number — finally interrupted their meditations.

"If you 'll pardon me for taking the liberty, gentlemen," he said, "I don't think Mr. King would be pleased with anything you could purchase for money."

On hearing this the little caucus looked dismayed, and not a few of the men felt a sense of personal injury, persuaded that Endicott had destroyed their last hope of reaching a satisfactory solution of the problem they had in hand. But the Englishman was not through. He went on, speaking slowly and seriously, weighing his words with the utmost deliberation.

"There are some things more to be valued than any gift money can buy. Men of influence are present, who no doubt have a personal acquaintance with the chief executive of the State. One scratch of the governor's pen" —

There was no need of further explanation. There was a loud burst of applause, each man instantly ratifying the suggestion by the only means at his command. John Rutherford was unanimously constituted their delegate, and promptly departed to execute his mission.

Two days later that distinguished executive, the Governor of California, was enjoying a morning plunge in the sea at Santa Monica. Although possessed of a somewhat corpulent frame, the governor was an accomplished swimmer, and gamboled in the

surf with the grace and agility of a porpoise. He was just in the act of diving from a long plank which projected over the water, when a voice called out his name.

"Spellman! Look here."

The summons came too late to arrest the swimmer's plunge. The governor disappeared beneath the waves, and an instant later came up a few rods away, puffing and blowing, to see John Rutherford's tall form standing on the spot he had just left.

"Out of that in a hurry, Spellman! Don't lose a minute!"

"What is the matter? Has the State Museum taken fire, or have some enterprising cracksmen made off with another set of platinum medals? Or are matters going to the 'demnition bow-wows' for lack of another appropriation?"

"I have a paper for you to sign."

"I call this persecution, Rutherford — interrupting a man in the midst of his bath, to trouble him with affairs of state. Of course you 'll allow me to put on my canonicals."

"No quarter, governor! I 'll only make you suspend your ablutions for a moment. They were not half as merciful to Cincinnatus, when they took him from his agricultural pursuits."

The bather had mounted the steps with dripping garments, and sat on the edge of the pier, looking like a very jolly modern edition of Neptune. The mineralogist handed him a document and a stylographic pen. After a brief persual the governor looked up with a puzzled expression.

"Philip King! Where have I heard that name? I have it now. But what in thunder does it mean? The man was up to Sacramento to see me on the same business last spring; but not for himself; for another man — an old fellow from one of the northern counties, who, it seems, had been rather shabbily treated by the State."

"I can believe it," said John Rutherford, his face lighting up. "It is just like him. All the more reason why you should sign this paper without delay. My train leaves in ten minutes."

The governor obediently signed his name and scrawled a rude representation of the state seal below.

"It is n't a very proper sort of paper, but I think it will hold," he ruefully declared. "You know I 'm fond of forms and ceremonies, Rutherford, and I believe you 're laughing in your sleeve because you have caught me in this plight. Off with you now, or you 'll be late."

On the evening following John Rutherford's interview with the governor there was a quiet wedding at St. Luke's Chapel, the modest house of worship which its parishioners delighted to call "The Little Church Around the Corner." A number of invited guests were present, but there was no attempt at display; and in place of the usual flutter of expectancy and curious speculation, a solemn hush pervaded the church, as a man and woman — the latter dressed with the utmost simplicity, but wearing upon her face the glowing beauty of perfect happiness — stood before the clergyman, and

bowed their heads to receive the holiest sacrament of life.

They turned to leave the church, when a man forced his way through the vestibule and up the crowded aisle; a man in traveling dress, begrimed and dust-laden, who had only just reached the city on a delayed train from the south, and had raced to the church in a hack. His face was flushed, and drops of perspiration rolled down his forehead, but he never halted until he had pushed his way to the very altar, and met the bridal pair as they were on the verge of the steps.

Trembling and amazed, the bride received the huge envelope he had thrust into her hand. Mechanically doing his bidding as one who moves in a dream, she tore open the packet and unfolded the document it contained, her husband looking curiously on the while. She had gone to the altar happy and content to share the fate of a man degraded before society and deprived of his political rights. As she comprehended the import of the paper before her, curious observers saw her look up into her husband's face, and smile. Such a smile! What worlds of encouragement and cheer and love it spoke!

King reeled as if he had received a blow. During all his long and wearisome struggle with the world he had never shown the white feather until then. He tried to speak, but words failed him; to smile his pleasure and surprise, but his lips quivered, his jaw shut tightly, and his eyes fixed upon some distant point with the effort of a strong man

who strives to hold some overpowering emotion in check.

A reporter — an impudent-looking fellow attached to the staff of the "Daily Gong," who had been leaning against a pillar a few paces away, trying to school himself against a growing weakness which somehow prevented him from treating the affair as if it were a horse-race or a scene in the police court — beat a hasty retreat.

Several gentlemen occupying front seats, who were in the secret, felt unaccountably weak and foolish. Egad! how the air grew blurred and the lights swam and burned low, while the hum of wonder and outspoken inquiry throughout the church was succeeded by quick-drawn breaths and women's sobs, as the news flew over the house.

The paper which John Rutherford had placed in the hands of the bride was a full and unconditional pardon, restoring Philip King to the dear rights of an American citizen.

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